

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

HAPPY NEW YEAR. BY THE time you receive this magazine, we will be three months into 2005. Hiring for new smokejumpers will have taken place, trail projects for the upcoming NSA program will have been prioritized, and we will have topped 130 life members for the NSA. Not bad for a 2005 start. During two days in January, I had the opportunity to visit both Earl Cooley and Fred Brauer at their homes. It was very educational at both places. Earl is now 93 and Fred 87. Both still are very sharp and remember the events of their jumps a lot better than I do. I say thank you to both of them for pioneering the way for the rest of us.

As for 2005, my goals as president are: 1) Invest money assets, in excess of minimum working capital requirements, to provide income to supplement other income sources for achieving the NSA mission. This is currently being evaluated, with recommendations to come, by an Investment Committee of four board members. 2) Recruit and encourage current and recent smokejumpers to become NSA members. 3) Find someone to take over the Merchandizing Director position. Chuck Sheley has done an excellent job in establishing this as a

large moneymaker; however he wants to back away from this, while still maintaining his position as editor of the magazine. So, if you are interested, please come forward. 4) Lastly, find volunteers to spearhead the next National Reunion in Boise 2007. If you have any interest in being a member of this team, give us a call. The 2004 MSO committee has kept quality records with recommendations for the 2007 committee which should make it easier.

It's going to be a great year. So, until next time, Hook up, the door is yours. There is a 100 yards of drift and the whole world is a jump spot. 🍄

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Run-Ins with Wildlife and Other Critters

by Denis Symes (McCall '63)

When jumping into backcountry forest lands, you can run into all kinds of things, some fun and some a surprise, some with fur and some with scales. Every jumper has stories of such run-ins; here are some of mine.

On a 1963 fire-jump on the Council Ranger District of the Payette Forest, the landing spot was to have been a large meadow (about 400 yards long by 100 yards wide that fell off into a steep 75 foot-high slope of rocks and boulders). The fire was about a half-mile away, down the boulder-ridden slope, across a small clearing (about 30 yards across), and then up the side of the mountain. Running water had eroded the smaller clearing so that two deep creeks were

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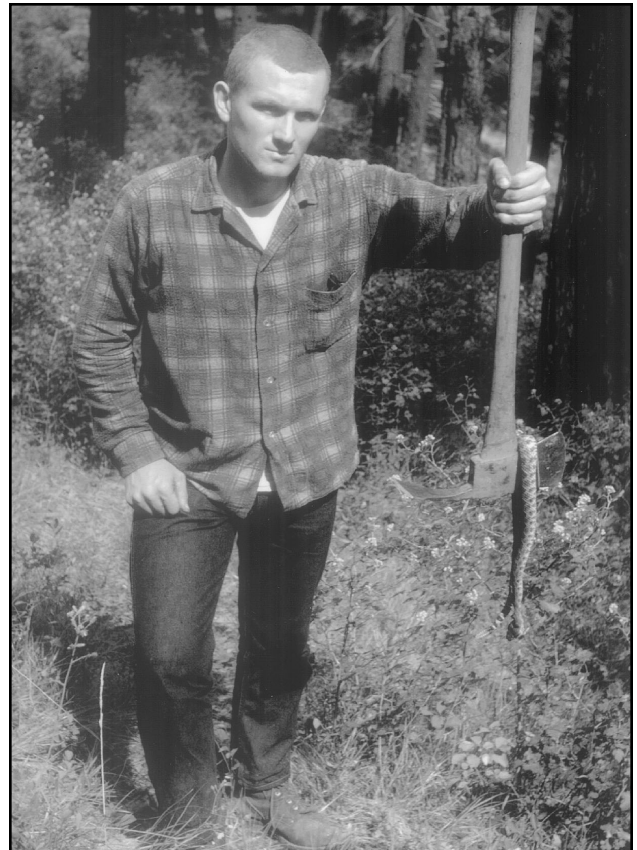
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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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



Denis Symes (Courtesy Denis Symes)

carved about 10 yards apart, forming an “island” with very steep sides.

The jump ship was a Beech C-45 that carried 4 jumpers and the spotter (**Ray Beasley**, MYC-52), plus the pilot. Between the time of the streamer release and the jump time, the wind shifted dramatically, both in velocity and direction. I exited the plane, checked the canopy (we jumped FS-5A chutes), and then started steering the chute to the large meadow. No matter how I steered or held into the wind, I just kept backing up. I knew I was not going to make the large meadow. The second choice was the small clearing that lay below the large meadow.

While descending toward the small clearing, I saw a cow elk grazing precisely where I wanted to land, clear of the stream. To avoid landing on her and getting ridden out-of-town on an elk, I shouted, “Hey, get out of there.” She visibly tensed and looked around to see who shouted. I shouted again, and then a third time – each time she rapidly looked around to spot the intruder, never looking up. Finally, I turned right and aimed for the island. The “island”

was about 20' by 30' in size, not too large, given the wind; I certainly did not want to end up in the creek. I hit the island, rolled and quickly looked up to see the elk charging into the forest at the end of the meadow. She was probably so startled that she did not stop running until the lights of Boise came into view.

In another case, I jumped onto a fire in a drainage that overlooked the Middle Fork of the Salmon River (now the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness). After putting the fire down, my partner (**Alan Graham**, MYC-64) and I returned to the landing area to pack up our gear and get ready for the helicopter pickup. Approaching the landing area, he went one way around a large bush and I went the other. His way was longer, but avoided the necessity of stepping over several large fallen logs. I took the shorter way.

As I was about to step over a log, I saw a quick movement where my foot was going to land and realized that it was a rattler. I looked down to see a rattlesnake coiling under the log's curvature – I would have stepped on him had I not froze. While in the midst of breaking the world record for standing high jump, I let out a startled yell that had to be heard for miles.

Allan came quickly, and we killed the snake with a Pulaski. Today I regret killing the snake, but at the time, it

was a relief to know that he was out of the way. Of course, there were others still about.

In 1964, a crew of McCall jumpers was on a large fire in Wyoming (Gravel Creek Fire), east of Grand Teton National Park. Early in the morning, we sat to eat our lunch (should bologna sandwiches at 6 AM be called breakfast?). **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) was our foreman on the fire, and he discussed the plan to contain it. Suddenly, a small fawn came strolling through our gathering. Wayne immediately cautioned all of us to not touch the fawn, since it had apparently gotten separated from its mother while escaping the fire, and if the mother smelled human scent on it, she might abandon the fawn - if they later linked up. The fawn browsed through our group and disappeared into the burned area. I've always wondered whether it met up with the mother.

I worked in Glacier National Park during the summers of 1960-61, and we would occasionally run into Grizzlies. I'm sure that jumpers who have jumped into Glacier, Yellowstone, Alaska, etc. have stories of bear encounters. Let's hear them and any other critter stories. 🐾

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The Whiskey Bet

by Bill Little

During the summer of 1956, I was a packer on the Payette National Forest's Big Creek District; Bob Burkholder was the District Ranger. Bob rented a short string of horses for his personal use and we took them down Bib Creek on a test run. They were flat country horses and not trail wise.

While camping near the Taylor Ranch, we received a radio call telling us that two smokejumpers needed to be picked up on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, where Big Creek enters. Leaving Bob at the Taylor's, I took his short string plus my personal horse, Dutch, and started out for the Middle Fork. Dutch was "green-broke", having only recently been ridden. To be safe, I put him in the middle of the string and rode one of the flatlanders.

I expected to find the jumpers waiting at the Big Creek pack bridge where it spanned the Middle Fork. The bridge was one of the old swinging bridges that are now long gone. When I arrived, no one was there.

It was a hot afternoon and the jumpers, **Wayne Foltz** (MYC-56) and **Shep Johnson** (MYC-56), had found welcome shade behind some boulders high on the east side of the river. Wayne later told me there was a gap between the boulders, which offered a view of the pack bridge. Between snoozes in the shade, one of them would walk over and look between the rocks to see if the packer had arrived.

After a number of observations, Wayne came back and told Shep that the packer wasn't in sight. Shep looked philosophical and said, "I'll bet he's coming across the bridge right now." The bet was made and Wayne hurried over for another a look. To his great surprise, I was just starting across the bridge.

When I crossed to the east side of the river, neither the jumpers nor their tracks were visible along the river trail. I did not know in which direction they might be, so I decided to follow the trail upriver a short way. If I still couldn't find tracks, I'd turn around and head downriver.

Each horse's lead rope had previously been tied to a quarter inch "pegging string" fastened to the riding saddle or packsaddle of the animal ahead – this was a standard procedure. Getting off the horse I was riding, I looped the end of the lead rope over my saddle horn and started walking, leading the string with my head down looking for tracks.

I'd gone less than a hundred yards when the first horse in the string stepped over the lead rope's slack. Startled, he pulled back hard. Like dominos, the rest, including Dutch, also pulled back and the string started to slide off the edge of the steep trail toward the river. Quickly, I jerked out a knife, ran back and cut the lead rope between Dutch and the three saddle horses behind him. Dutch and first two



Historic Picture: Seeley Lake 1940. L-R: Frank Derry, Jim Alexander, Dick Johnson and Jim Waite. (Courtesy Jim "Smokey" Alexander)

were safe, but the other three tumbled down the rocky slope.

One went into the river, swam across, and came out on shore near the pack bridge. The second fell into the river, swam downstream a short way, and got out on a sandbar on the trailside below me. The third horse landed upside down between two boulders, pinned between them.

I was standing there watching this wreck and thinking how to recover when a crazy man came running up the trail shouting, "You S.O.B, you owe me a fifth of whiskey!" It was Wayne Foltz, followed closely by Shep.

I asked them to retrieve the two horses near the river while I worked on the one wedged in the rocks. Shep was the first one back and I asked for his help with the third horse. He was wedged pretty tight and was resigned to die there. We could not dislodge that horse!

Finally, I went to the riverbank, filled my hat with water and told Shep to stand back. I poured it down the horse's nose and that old flatlander popped out of those rocks like a cork, wheezing and snorting. Amazingly, there was no serious damage to the horses. After restringing the pack train, we started off. I got the jumpers to the Taylor Ranch where they were later flown to McCall.

I don't think I ever saw Shep again, but Wayne and I became good friends during our Forest Service careers. He'd always greet me with, "Hey you old S.O.B, you owe me a fifth of whiskey!" 🍷

Bill graduated from Colorado State with a degree in forest-range management. He worked for the Forest Service in Oregon, Idaho

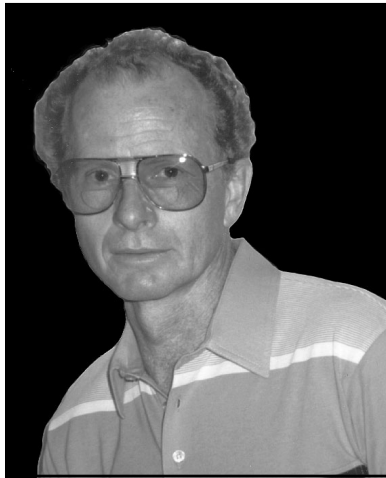
and Utah before retiring in 1988. He and his wife, Mary, live in Kino Bay, Mexico. Bill met Don Webb (MYC-56) in 1956 on a tree planting project on the Payette N.F. and, again, in Kino Bay where Bill read a copy of this magazine. Bill says, "Thanks to you and the Smokejumper Association for keeping the past alive."

Free Reunion 2000 Photos

I have a bunch of excellent 8x10 color group photos taken by Doug Beck at the 2000 reunion in Redding. I will send them to anyone interested at no cost. Drop me a line and let me know which ones you want. Have Alaska group, Cave Junction, CJ/Gobi, Idaho City, McCall, Missoula, Redding, and North Cascades. Even if you missed that reunion, you might want one of these for your collection.
(Chuck Sheley)



Sounding Off from the Editor



by Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)
MANAGING EDITOR

Firefighters Should Not Avoid Caffeine

I LISTEN TO SYNDICATED talk-show host Dr. Dean Edell on a regular basis. He always encourages listeners to pay special attention to statements related to health matters and challenges them to look for the scientific evidence behind any given claim. He recently debunked, for example, the accepted notion that we need eight glasses of water a day, reporting that a government agency basically pulled that amount out of the air a few years back.

I bring this up because I'm concerned about something I read recently and am worried that supposedly scientific claims might have a detrimental effect on how we fight fires. In its June 2004 issue, *Wildland Firefighter* ran a piece about caffeinated beverages and asserted that firefighters shouldn't drink them due to their diuretic qualities. I strongly take issue with this argument for several reasons.

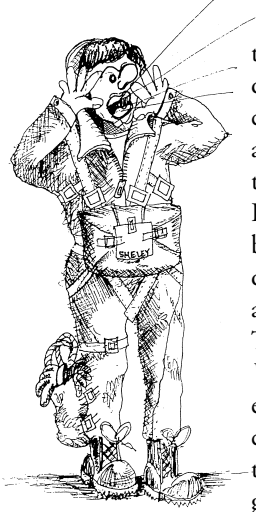
Caffeine may very well have some negative effects on the body, but let's consider for a moment the proven positive effects. The Committee on

Military Nutrition Research (CMNR) has reported that caffeine, in doses of 100 to 600 milligrams, can maintain cognitive performance, especially in situations of sleep deprivation. Keep in mind that cognitive performance typically plummets if you get less than seven hours of sleep and quite rapidly if you get less than four. CMNR scientists—whose test scenarios ranged from individuals operating radar-like displays to SEAL trainees participating in “Hell Week”—concluded that “even in the most adverse operational circumstances, moderate doses of caffeine have unequivocal, beneficial effects on cognitive performance.”

Other studies argue that caffeine sustains and actually improves physical performance as well. One showed that caffeine improves athletic performance for up to six hours after consumption. Findings like these were taken so seriously that, for a time, caffeine was even included on the International Olympic Committee's list of banned substances.

I find the military study particularly interesting and relevant, given the many similarities between the kinds of pressures soldiers and fire personnel regularly face. Both are required to sustain mental and physical agility over long hours. Both are often unable to get the proper amount of sleep and rest. (As most of us know, getting less than seven hours of sleep a night on a fire is not unusual; often only four hours is the case.) And most importantly, both require top performance at the risk of catastrophe. Whether you're fighting a war or fighting a fire, the stakes couldn't be higher.

Given these conditions, it's clear



that the positive effects of drinking a cup of coffee or a can of Coke far outweigh any negative effects, which themselves are debatable. I'm not so sure a caffeinated beverage or two would dehydrate a firefighter to any measurable extent. Taking the argument in *Wildland Firefighter* to the extreme, if you drank only coffee, you'd die of dehydration, which obviously isn't going to happen. Some studies back me up. A

Canadian biologist named T.E. Graham, for example, recently concluded “there is no evidence that caffeine ingestion before exercise leads to dehydration, ion imbalance, or any other adverse effects.”

The bottom line is this: Caffeine is proven to sustain and even improve mental and physical performance during extended periods in which getting the proper amount of sleep and rest is not realistic—the kind of conditions firefighters face all the time. Certainly the increase in a firefighter's mental prowess from caffeine ingestion would lessen the potential for accidents. Moreover, evidence of a negative diuretic effect is suspect and minimal and could even be negated by supplementing caffeine intake with extra water. If I drink three cups of coffee over a shift—about 24 ounces—and urinate 24.3 ounces, I'll take the coffee and pack an extra ounce of water.

I'd even go so far as to say there are times when firefighters *should* consume caffeine, and that caffeine pills or gum should become standard fireline items. Pills or gum would deliver caffeine to the circulatory system more rapidly than a cup of coffee, and would sure weigh less on the line. The military has already

taken this tack and provides caffeinated gum (five 100-milligram sticks per pack) to personnel operating around the clock for several days. Is the ingestion of anhydrous caffeine in capsule or gum form the wave of the future? I guess

only time will tell.

The key to most activities in life is moderation. Too much of anything can kill you. At the same time, drugs can be used to our advantage if we implement educated guidelines. It's up to you to become

educated on the subject—and to challenge conventional assertions when appropriate. Remember that at one time, ham on white bread was the approved nutritional standard for a fireline lunch. 🍖

The Forest Service-A Bureaucracy or a Ranch?

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

"Smokejumper" magazine asked Karl to give an insiders look at the USFS during the centennial year.

A bureaucracy does not exist to solve problems. The purpose of a bureaucracy is to manage problems in order to justify its existence. Has the U.S. Forest Service become a bureaucracy? Herein lies a tension between the field and disconnect with its management hierarchy. A field ranger has to solve problems on a daily basis. That is what we do. We fix fences, replace culverts, reroute trails, prescribe burn, graze livestock, harvest timber and put out forest fires. We talk in terms of fixing problems.

On the other hand, bureaucrats speak in terms of "issues." They hold "Leadership Team" meetings and read the latest management theories from the Harvard School of Business. The purposes of these meetings are to help define the latest "Washington Initiative" (manage problems), adhere to and promote policy (justify existence) and insulate to provide a safe work environment for bureaucrats (CYA). Bureaucrats have an affinity for counting beans and holding others accountable.

Field rangers read books on management like *A Band of Brothers* by Stephen Ambrose or Gilford Pinchot's *Breaking New Ground*. These books talk about problems and how to resolve or overcome them. They also champion leadership and authority at the lowest possible level within the organization.

Many today say we are facing a huge fuel buildup and catastrophic fires because our original management policies were flawed. I submit that nothing could be further from the truth. Our fire suppression policies have worked for about 70% of the National Forest System Lands (30 % commercial forest and 40% rangeland = 70%). Today, we also have fire plans to cover our wilderness areas as first proposed by forester Elers Koch in the 1930's (See *Forty Years a Forester* by Elers Koch). Policy is not the problem according to the Wyoming State Forester Bill Crapser who states; *"Our fire and fuels problem is a direct result of too little management or no management at all."* Could our resource management problems of today be a direct result of a cultural conversion from the ranch management ideal (Multiple Use) to a bureaucracy?

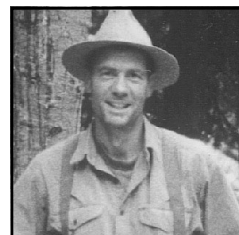
I say to folks, and you can quote me; *"It doesn't matter how many cows you have in the pasture; if all you have are steers in the bull pen; well, then, don't count on doing any spring calving."* Ev-

ery rancher understands this concept; **Authority must equal Responsibility.**

You can not continue to increase responsibility and at the same time diminish the authority of the district ranger. You can not expect to get work accomplished by decommissioning ranger districts through centralized consolidations. You can not expect the public to understand the "Multiple Use" mission when there is no longer a district ranger and professional staff in small town America. Today, a district ranger's word is worth about \$25.00. That is all the authority he has to issue a free use permit or conduct other administrative business. So in effect, the Forest Service, through consolidation and loss of power on the ground, has become irrelevant in small town America. A non-contributor.

Historically you can watch as the Forest Service became ineffective over the last two decades. The legal mess of over 150 regulations governing the management of our forests is part of the authority problem. However, the agency shares a part of the blame in this move from "bulls" to "steers." It's in the uniform we wear that went from authority to neuter in 1978 with pea-green polyester "colors." It's how we blame ourselves and never stand up for what is right. Have you ever wondered what the Monongahela Clear Cuts look like today? Well, you would not know they are there unless a professional forester pointed them out to you. Yet, these clear cuts sparked controversy and regulations that we live with still today. When I asked that the Monongahela Clear Cuts be revisited, I was told that the agency did not want to open up old wounds. So, I thought; "Where is the quest for truth?" I do know that in its absence my authority to manage the forest on the ground has diminished. Today, I have more authority as a Wyoming State citizen than I do as a federal officer. Did the agency throw away the authority and trust they gave me 30 years ago because of political correctness and an ignorance of truth? Can that authority ever be regained?

So where do we go from here? To re-commission our closed down ranger districts is a good place to start. Then give our field officers the authority they need to accomplish the job. Streamline the environmental laws. Stand up for Forestry. Stop blam-



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

Continued on page 8

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

ALAN HACKETT, THE Incident Commander on the fatal 2003 Cramer Fire, was sentenced to 18 months Federal probation in November 2004. Hackett made a pre-trial agreement with Federal prosecutors to avoid criminal charges and the probation will be kept off his record. According to the agreement, Hackett cannot work for the Forest Service during his probation, but if he successfully completes probation, he will be eligible to re-apply for his position. Due to privacy rules, the Forest Service cannot comment on the status of Hackett's federal retirement or other benefits. Several other managers on that fire have been re-assigned. I really don't know what this solves? Is this justice? Is this what the lives of Jeff Allen and Shane Heath are worth? Perhaps Allan Hackett should have been sentenced to 18 months of training and mentoring by experienced Type I Incident Commanders. Most of the burnovers and fatalities are occurring on Type 2, 3 and 4 fires. The Type 2,3 and 4 fires are where the government needs to re-emphasize training and oversight. Some of the same mistakes that were made at South Canyon were made on the Thirty Mile Fire

(2001) and on the Cramer Fire in 2003. While we can never make firefighting completely safe, we have to find a way to stop making the same mistakes over and over again.

In a jailhouse interview last year, Terry Barton, the Forest Service employee convicted of starting the twenty nine million dollar, 138,000 acre Hayman Fire in Colorado, told a reporter that the Forest Service is partially to blame for the fire because of alleged mistakes in staffing, equipment and strategy. "I truly believe if it was fought properly, it would have been out in two to three days, maybe four at the most. I truly don't believe you can blame everything on me," she stated. I am sure the Parole Board will take her expert analysis of the fire into consideration. Her original 12-year sentence was thrown out on appeal, and she is to be re-sentenced this year. It is unknown whether or not she will be able to resume her career with the Forest Service when she completes her sentence. Due to privacy rules, the Forest Service cannot comment on the status of Barton's federal retirement or other benefits.

The Department of Homeland Security is spending your tax dollars

equipping volunteer fire departments across the west with expensive 16 channel radios. Small volunteer fire departments are receiving as many as one radio for every two members. At the same time, these same volunteer fire departments cannot get copies of the new edition of the Emergency Response Guidebook, the orange book that has updated information on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Bioterrorism, due to a shortage. Last fall at a Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting, I asked the County Disaster Coordinator for two copies of the guidebook for my organization. He acted like I was asking for the Guttenberg Bible. Something is wrong when we can get 16 channel radios we neither want nor need but cannot get copies of the most basic hazardous materials manuals which cost \$10.00

This Column is dedicated to the memory of Roy Wenger CPS-103 Administrator who passed away December 2, 2004. It was my pleasure to share a table with Roy and his wife with on Sunday morning at the reunion last year along with Associate Jill Leger and **Dennis Symes (MYC-63)**. Roy led an examined life. 🙏

Bureaucracy or a Ranch?

Continued from page 7

ing ourselves for every little wrong from the past. Then look out. "Issues" will no longer matter because problems will be solved.

The present administration appears to be on track through an overhaul of environmental law. Our Chief has also taken steps to save the districts through a reduction in support and business functions. Will it be enough? Does the outfit have the resolve to see it through?

It might require the drastic steps of a president like Theodore Roosevelt or Ronald Regan to effect any real organizational change. If you remember, President Regan proposed abolishing the entire land management bureaucracy and starting over again with a new Department of Natural Resources. If this were to happen, I hope they put a few good field rangers at the top to ask the tough questions. Questions like; "*How will this decision affect the rangers and firefighters on the ground?*" Or better yet; "*How will this decision give our district rangers greater authority and clarity of mission?*" The "Rough Rider" and North Dakota rancher "Teddy" Roosevelt would probably ask no less of us. 🙏

Karl can be reached at: brauneisfam@wyoming.com

Smokejumpers to the Ravens

by Gene Hamner (Missoula '67)

Part Two

“As the war dragged on, so the myth grew. Apparently, there was another war even nastier than the one in Vietnam. The men who chose to fight in it were handpicked volunteers, and anyone accepted for a tour seemed to disappear as if from the face of the earth.

“The pilots were military men, but flew into battle in civilian clothes. They fought with obsolete propeller aircraft and suffered the highest casualty rate of the Indochinese War—as high as 50 percent. Their job was to fly as the winged artillery of an army of Stone Age mercenaries (Hmong) in the pay of the CIA, and they operated out of a secret city hidden in the mountains on the Red Chinese border. The pilots spoke of colleagues who had vanished into the highly classified operation code-named the ‘Steve Canyon Program.’

“Insiders who worked with them knew these pilots as the Ravens. The legend has become hazy, a half-remembered war story known only to a few veterans of Vietnam. ‘The Steve Canyon Program? The Ravens—a weird bunch of guys who lived and fought out there in the jungle in the Other Theater somewhere. Hell, what was the name of the country?’”

– Excerpted from *The Ravens: The Men Who Flew in America's Secret War in Laos*, by Christopher Robbins.

In the January issue, Gene Hamner (MSO-67) re-counted his approach to combat. A newly minted Air Force pilot in the spring of 1970, Hamner requested this dangerous assignment. His philosophy: “If you're going to go to war, go fight it.” After a year over Laos, he learned he'd been accepted into what was known as “the Steve Canyon Program,” a redoubtably elite unit created by the CIA to help carry out its so-called “secret war” in Laos. Hamner thus embarked on his career as a “Raven.”

“Elation” doesn't nearly describe how I felt. On August 15, 1971, I was standing in front of the commander getting a quick briefing of what he expected from me. He told me this was the last time I would wear an Air Force uniform until I left the program and arrived back in the States. I was to send anything military home, and my military ID would be taken from me when I reached the embassy in Vientiane, Laos. He also asked that I *not* do like all the Ravens before me and let all this “I'm civilian, so you can't touch me” stuff go to my head. Of course I said, “Yes sir,” not even beginning to comprehend what he was saying. By the time I left the Ravens, I knew.

The people in the Steve Canyon Program wanted to do more than just spend a year in Vietnam, throw some rockets and bombs around the jungles, and go home. We actually wanted to fight the war. When we volunteered for the program, few of us knew what we were actually volunteering

for. We signed out of the Air Force and became civilians. Most of us were in our mid-twenties when we gave up our uniforms and were given airplanes, told what the objective was, and then turned loose with very little supervision.

We spent months as Ravens, finding targets, supplies, enemy troops, and boats; seeing fellow Ravens get killed because they went beyond the reasonable limits; and working with CIA people who passed targets on to us over beers at night. The list goes on and on. We volunteered to help the Laotians, Hmong, and other ethnic groups, because they were helping the U.S. That is a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of a few guys in their twenties.

We often experienced problems when we encountered uniformed people. They took umbrage at the fact that we fought the war in Levis and t-shirts. They didn't like our hair, which we'd let grow way beyond military standards. Many didn't like the fact that we answered only to the embassy in Laos. In my opinion, the military hates people in the Special Ops world whom they can't control. The pressure got to all the Ravens, who flew daily on the edge. Many typically drank hard at night. Doing so in Vientiane with Air America pilots and other civilians was fine, but kicking back in Udorn or Bangkok only added to the image others had of us as wild renegades. Several times toward the end of my tour with the Ravens, I reflected on what the colonel had said to me in that initial briefing, and I realized that I had changed like all the others before me.

As soon as I left the colonel's office, I was given an operating manual for the O-1. I was scheduled to start the checkout beginning the next day. I flew twice a day, and the checkout in the O-1 Birddog was completed quickly. Afterwards, I was issued a CAR-15 rifle. Then I walked over to Air America's ops office to arrange for a ride to Vientiane, Laos.

After a 30-minute trip, the helicopter landed near the embassy. As I deplaned, I noticed some unknown person taking my picture from a distance. One of the crewmen on the helicopter said the man was a French communist photographer, and my picture would shortly be on file with the KGB, the NVA, the PL (Pathet Lao, the Laotian version of the Viet Cong), and the Chinese. I got a ride to the embassy, where I was issued an embassy card. They took my military ID and locked it in a safe. I was made to sign a letter stating that my cover while in Laos was that I worked for the Laotian Forest Service. As I was probably the only Raven who held a degree in forest management, I knew I'd be more than able to spout that cover story with a straight face.

I was given a short tour of the embassy and then taken to the Raven “safe house” near downtown Vientiane. I picked a

bunk, threw my things on it, and went outside to look around. It was late afternoon, and Ravens working the area around Vientiane later showed up. After brief introductions, we hopped in their jeep and headed downtown for initiation.

The next day, I left Vientiane on a C-123 and flew up to my area of operations at Luang Prabang (LP). As I stepped off of the C-123, I thought about the day that I'd stepped off the DC-8 at Cam Rahn Bay. That was a thousand miles away and an eon ago. The person who stepped off that DC-8 no longer existed. This day, I had no idea what the future would hold.

The Future Is Now

I met the AOC commander and the Laotian ground crew. We drove into LP, where our compound was located. After settling in, I had to prepare my maps of the area, load many clips of M-16 ammo, and pack a personal "survival" bag consisting of more ammo, extra water, grenades, flares, and CBU bomblets (which we tossed down at enemy soldiers when we caught them in the open). What a bizarre experience. The next day, I flew with the departing Raven, whose spot I was taking. He took me on a tour of the various airstrips we used (also called "Lima Sites"), and we met the CIA case officers who ran them. Two days later, after putting in several flights of T-28 aircraft on targets, I was checked out. Initially, I flew the area close to LP. As that area became familiar, I moved farther north.

One day, I was operating not far from Dien Bien Phu and found some camouflaged supplies. I requested several flights of T-28s from LP. The first T-28 dropped two 500-pound bombs that set off a secondary explosion and sent a fireball more than 1,500 feet in the air. The concussion from that explosion sent the T-28 nearly out of control. As I worked the other planes, there were more explosions, some even more violent than the first. Some bombs weren't on-target, and as foliage blew off trees and the ground, more supplies were exposed. I was running short on fuel and had a long flight back to LP, so I returned to base and that night passed the target on to another Raven, named Brad.

The next morning, I flew the O-1 to Udorn to get another Birddog. I was gone three days. When I returned, I asked Brad about the supplies. He replied he hadn't been up there. I couldn't believe that he would leave such a target alone for so long, so the next morning I went straight up to that location. Most of the remaining supplies were gone. I couldn't see how they all could have been moved in such a short period of time.

As I pondered the mystery, I called on my experience as a forestry major designing logging roads and surveying forests in the redwood forests of Northern California. I also summoned my experience as a smokejumper traversing the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. These 5-foot-two, 120-pound men could only do so much in order to get the supplies on boats and move them downriver, I reasoned. There had to be an endpoint where they could unload the boats and move the supplies. They didn't have any roads, only trails, so I concluded that water buffalo would be the

likely means of transportation. I only needed to look for large herds of the animals and a place with access to the river. As I flew downriver, I saw that they had sunk the boats and hid them under the grass. Nearby, I found trails running up the creek beds and under the jungle canopy. As I followed the trails, I came to a valley with many caves. Everything was well-hidden and well-camouflaged.

I sat on the target for a couple days, not getting too close and not flying by too often. As I watched from a distance, I saw that a buffalo herd began to build in numbers. I knew that most of the supplies had been brought in now, and the PL was getting ready to move them from the river and caves. I put a request in to the embassy for what we called Papa Whiskeys (early versions of the smart, laser-guided bombs) for the caves. The F-4s arrived on time, early in the morning. I got a good mark in the mouth of the largest cave and backed off to let them set up. The laser-guided bomb hit in the mouth of the cave, setting off both a series of secondary explosions and a rockslide that covered the mouth. Shortly afterward, a huge explosion blew the rocks away, exposing the mouth again. Many secondary explosions continued for a long time after the initial explosion. Even the F-4 pilots were excited about the extent of the bomb damage. There was a notable lack of enemy activity along the river and the area north of LP for many weeks after those strikes.

"We Considered The Mission A Complete Success"

As we discussed the number of boats the enemy used to move supplies, we formulated a plan to take advantage of the low stratus clouds that covered the Nam Ou River in the early-morning hours. It was decided that one of us would take an O-1 up the river at first light, flying under the stratus. The pilot would look for the boats, counting on total surprise to catch them on the river. As soon as they were sighted, the O-1 pilot would fire a rocket at or near the boats to get the people to jump overboard. As soon as the stratus burned off, the T-28s would come up and destroy the boats.

We were on the flight-line well before first light. My colleague, Doc, was going to lead the strike flight of T-28s when the clouds cleared sufficiently. When I could see well enough to fly under the stratus, my Laotian interpreter climbed in the backseat, and we took off. As I approached the Nam Ou, I dropped down to about 50 feet, well under the clouds, and turned up the river. Surprise was everything. If they had time to get to shore and get ready for me, I was going to be a sitting duck as I flew by them at 80 knots.

I was literally on the edge of my seat peering into the dim light ahead of me. I made a wide turn around one bend and spotted many boats ahead. Slamming the throttle full forward to give me all the speed my bucket of bolts would allow, I fired the first rocket, then jinked hard left and right so I would be a difficult target to hit. The second rocket hit much closer to the boats than the first, and it produced the results we had expected. The people in the boats jumped in the water, and now the boats were freewheeling down the



Gene Hamner, Hmong pilot, Hmong women and unidentified American in opium poppy field 1971. (Courtesy Gene Hamner)

river and jamming up on the rocks. Suddenly, I heard automatic weapons fire, and I banked hard, waiting to hear the bullets hitting our aircraft. Nothing happened. Turning around, I saw that Seo (my backseat interpreter) had unstrapped himself and had taken my CAR-15, stuck it out the window, and was firing at the people along the bank and in the water. Maybe he had seen too many John Wayne movies at night at the Raven hootch. I was praying once again, but this time I was praying that he didn't hit the wing strut, the landing gear, or the tail while he was shooting. I called Doc and gave him a brief rundown of the situation. He brought in the strike flight of T-28s. We considered the mission a complete success, and we eagerly planned the next.

Causing "A Stir"

Another "boat kill" mission had some interesting international implications. A CIA agent named Chip asked to go along with us this day. We paralleled the Nam Ou River, and I saw about five or six boats in the river just ahead of me. I fired in a spray pattern, forcing people to bail out of the boats. Chip was not prepared for my action and seemed agitated. I knew why: Directives from the agency specifically prohibited any employee from flying combat missions unless approved by the CIA's station chief prior to the flight. When Chip asked to come along, I told him that we were just going to recon a suspected POW camp and the river. I didn't say anything about engaging in low-level strafing runs just 10-15 miles from Dien Bien Phu. Chip asked that I leave his name off of any report.

We landed, and he jumped out of the plane. I took off and headed back to the target. Upon returning, I taxied into the parking area, and there was Chip pacing the tarmac. Even before I shut the engine down, he was on the wing

asking questions about the boats, the coordinates, and what else I saw. He didn't give me any explanation. After dinner that night, he took me into the agency's intel room and grilled me some more. Now I was nervous.

The next day, the embassy wanted me to go to the CIA intel bunker again and answer more questions. I was asked only about the Chinese. Later I found out why. It turned out that the convoy of boats was loaded with Chinese officers and dignitaries, as well as with high-ranking NVA people. Few knew then that President Nixon was planning his trip to China (which took place in February of 1972).

My strike had caused some kind of a stir between the two governments. Even though the targets were in a combat zone, some higher-up was evidently very unhappy about what had happened. Shortly after the strike, we received a message that we were to stay away from anything Chinese. The question was: How would we know that until after the fact? But I did stop lobbing rockets at the storage area at Pakbeng, the village on the Mekong at the end of the Chinese road. The Chinese communists didn't stop shooting at me when I flew past the village, though.

Becoming Seasoned

December 1971 was memorable for more than one reason. December was at the heart of the dry season, and activity was hot and heavy—way too much for only two Ravens to handle, but no one else was available to come up to LP. Several other Ravens at various locations had been killed or seriously injured during the first part of the month, and there weren't enough FACs in the pipeline to fill all the demand. We were working from dawn to dark every day, and ground commanders all over my region were screaming for help. There just weren't enough hours in the day, days in the month, or Ravens in Southeast Asia to handle the demand.

There was also the arrival of an NBC film crew, which had shown up to shoot a documentary about the secret war. The program was to get some airtime with the approval of the embassy. Some filming took place in the southern part of Laos, but the primary emphasis of the documentary was the war as it was being fought in the north. When the crewmembers arrived at Long Tieng, they filmed Air America operations and the ground war involving the Hmong and Thai "volunteers." They then came to LP and set up to film Raven and T-28 air operations. I flew the

camera crew in the backseat of my O-1 in an area where it would be relatively quiet and safe. On the first trip out, I found many piles of supplies that the NVA had moved downriver and left unhidden (most likely thinking that since we seldom worked that area, the materiel would be safe). The crew filmed while we struck the area. That night I was interviewed, and my comments, along with the air strikes, made it on the televised documentary. Called "Inside the Secret War in Laos," it aired on NBC in March 1972.

The Chinese built a road from Dien Bien Phu so that insurgents and supplies could more easily be sent into northern Thailand. It was lined with radar-controlled anti-aircraft artillery, and the road was a dangerous and deadly place to work. Proof of the danger came on December 27, 1971, when an Air America C-123 ventured too close to the road and was shot down. I spent two days involved with the unsuccessful search and rescue of the crew. *[Ed Weissenback (CJ-64) was a kicker on that mission. – Editor.]*

A Tough Operation

I was called off search and rescue and joined an operation that involved the insertion and extraction of Lao personnel on hard sites and along infiltration routes across Laos to Thailand. Although this was probably a violation of the embassy-imposed rule to avoid any Chinese, no one squawked. I think it was probably because the CIA set up the insertions, and my services were needed to provide air cover for the friendlies.

I attended a briefing with the CIA case officer and the Air America helicopter and Porter pilots who would transport and supply the Lao troops. My initial job would be to reconnoiter the area surrounding the hard sites and put in air strikes as necessary. Then, when I deemed the area safe, I would escort the helicopters to the landing zones. All the T-28s would be stationed at Ban Houai Sai, so I would have a flight of four overhead at all times.

Off I went. The travel time was only about 20 minutes to the first site. We were far enough away that AAA did not present a major threat, but close enough that it made the T-28 pilots very nervous and somewhat inaccurate with their bombing. The felling of the C-123 was fresh on everyone's mind. I entered the area and immediately dropped down to treetop level. I had one window of the O-1 opened, and I had pulled a pin on a smoke grenade and was holding it out the window. If I heard someone shooting at me, I would drop the grenade and use the smoke to mark the spot where the ground fire came from. This maneuver, called "trolling," was common practice among the Ravens.

I was jinking around the hard site at treetop level, listening for ground fire. Nothing. I put in an air strike at a couple locations, hoping to make the PL think that I had them spotted so that they would shoot. Still nothing. I reported what was happening. We agreed that I would proceed back to the area, and if I didn't hear any ground fire, the helicopters would bring in the troops. Still no ground fire, and I called and said the area appeared safe. The first helicopter landed and dropped off the troops. The second helicopter was committed to landing, when all hell

broke loose. The PL started shooting with mortars and heavy small-arms fire. Both helicopters were hit. One went down, and the other limped partway back to base. I spent the rest of that day and the next five days covering medivac flights that were recovering dead and wounded people. So much for interdicting the insurgents.

Two weeks after this operation, a Volpar aircraft carrying crewman **Robert Herald** (MSO-55) was hit by ground fire while distributing leaflets close to the Chinese road. One round exploded close to the plane, sending fragments into the aircraft. Jim Rhyne, who was in the back throwing leaflets with Herald, was hit and badly hurt. The plane was able to fly back to Udorn, and Rhyne, who lost part of his left leg, survived. I had heard the radio calls from Herald but wasn't close enough to offer any assistance.

Flash forward to the Air America reunion in Las Vegas 2001, where I and several other smokejumpers had our pictures taken together after the dinner. One of those smokejumpers was Robert Herald. As we chatted about flying in Laos in 1971-72, Herald mentioned he was on that Volpar. I recounted my experience, and we worked to merge our collective memories of that incident. Thirty years had passed, and our paths crossed again. What a coincidence that he too had been a jumper.

Final Days

January 1972 was decision-time for me. Should I ask for another tour in the Ravens, or go on to another assignment in the Air Force? In all honesty, two years of FAC flying was eating on me. I had been luckier than many, seldom catching a hit, doing some amazing things, and getting out unscathed. Many friends had been killed. Over on the PDJ, several Ravens had been killed in just the last month. All of Laos was heating up in favor of the NVA, and U.S. involvement was diminishing. General Westmoreland's favorite statement—"there is a light at the end of the tunnel"—indicated to me that there was a freight train coming. It was time to pull the plug and go home.

Then came the most dangerous time statistically for combat personnel: the last three months of duty. The first three months are bad in that people are unfamiliar with their assignments and are extremely cautious as they take time to learn the ropes. After they have the hang of it, soldiers can exercise good judgment and take more risks. Barring a "golden BB" (a fluky, lucky shot by the enemy), a soldier's chances of going home are very good. The last three months are something else. As soon as we arrived, we were briefed that the final three months are when many people are killed, because they now know all the rules, have been lucky, and want to show everyone how good they are. In short, they get careless at a time when the bad guys are getting better. I should know; it happened to me. In order to locate the enemy, it was common practice for us to fly at treetop level and to troll for ground fire. I thought that the golden BB wouldn't catch me, and I had no fear of a 12.7-mm gun. What was I thinking? I beat the odds and made it, though. Just the dumb luck of a kid.

I asked for an assignment to fly C-141s at McChord AFB

in Washington state and got it. I broke the news to the Lao pilots, who were there for the duration. They were excited for me. The Filipinos who worked for Air America and who were my crew chiefs began planning an “end-of-tour” party for me. They killed a pig and buried it in the ground for a slow, steamy roast. They bought some Lao-Lao and rice wine and cooked all the usual local foods, including sticky rice to be eaten with either a hot sauce or a fish sauce. We took an afternoon off and sat down to eat all this food. I tried virtually anything and everything they offered me to eat. This meal remains one of the best I ever had.

Back To The States

It all came to an end around the middle of March, when I finally climbed aboard a C-130 to fly down to Bangkok. I was on 30 days’ leave, still in civilian clothes, packing an embassy card instead of a military ID. As I out-processed, I felt remorse and emptiness when I thought of leaving the Tango pilots and the people of Laos behind. At that time, I truly regretted having to come home. Now I know that I was “going native.” It was best that I came home when I did. One more tour, and I doubt that I would have left. The realization that the war was over didn’t hit until I got off the C-141 at Travis AFB in California and was greeted by my brother, Earl.

Once I was back in the States and at home, I bought a Toyota station wagon and drove up to McChord AFB. As soon as I arrived, I checked into the squadron. The scheduler claimed that no one had notified him that I was coming, and so they hadn’t called for a slot at Altus AFB in Oklahoma for my upgrade training. No one was greeting me with open arms. I had forgotten what squadron life was like.

They asked if I wanted to take a ride. I jumped at the chance to get familiarized with the C-141. I had just come from a small, single-engine, tandem-seated, propeller-driven plane that wouldn’t do 100 knots if you pointed it straight at the ground. Now I was going to fly a four-engine jet that took off at a max gross weight of 323,000 pounds. Sure, I would take the opportunity to get a ride in it.

The trip, which lasted about 10 days, was an eye-opener. My uniformed Air Force life to date had been limited to Webb AFB at Big Spring, Texas, where I went to pilot-training; the bases where I had survival training; and Hurlburt Air Base in Florida, where I upgraded in the Oscar Deuce. Nakhon Phanom was a “secret” combat base, and most rules there were fairly lax, so it didn’t really count. Now I was flying around the world (or so it seemed) in this aluminum overcast. The best part of all was the end-leg each day, when we headed to the officers’ club for the mandatory gallon or so of beer and war stories. Life was good.

Once the beer started flowing, it was interesting to hear the war stories as told by the first lieutenants who had never strapped on anything more than C-141s. They were willing to tell anyone who would listen how they had cheated death when they landed at some base in Vietnam that had been under attack several days prior to their landing. Their courage was reassuring.

One thing I learned during these story-telling sessions: Without proof, there’s no point in telling even a perfectly unembellished war story. At that time the Steve Canyon Program was still top-secret, and I had signed a paper at the embassy swearing silence about my time and duties in Laos. Consequently, some of my stories sounded like so much b.s. Still it was fun, especially being able to converse with people in normal English.

One person who had trouble believing much of what I could discuss was the aircraft commander. He was a young captain whose name I can no longer remember. His eye-opener came when we landed at Udorn, and he saw me talking to some Air America pilots. To Air Force pilots, Air America pilots were close to gods. They flew super-dangerous, super-secret missions for the CIA, worked in the CIA heaven of Laos, and made untold sums of money. Here I was talking and laughing with one as if I actually knew him. We checked into the Bachelor Officers’ Quarters and planned the night’s activities. Because I’d supposedly been stationed here before, it was suggested I guide these guys around. They winked at one another as they asked for the cook’s tour of Udorn. Knowing mostly the spooks’ havens, I took them to places that weren’t the G.I. hangouts they were expecting. Where we went, the men had long hair or long sideburns, then the style of Air America pilots. Talk about being out of your element. I recognized one guy and went over to talk to him, and that broke the ice. After hearing us tell some “real” war stories, my crew had a new respect for me.

An Unexpected Encounter

Back at McChord, I got a flight to Altus AFB to settle in for three months of upgrade training. Being a captain, I had a chance to get a room by myself. I wanted the solitude, because I had the fear of God in me. This was a complex aircraft, and learning the systems was going to take some real concentration. So what happens? I meet my wife-to-be.

I was sitting in the stag bar one night talking to a guy who had worked in the embassy in Vientiane, when 2nd Lt. Rebecca Walden walked in wearing a beret. Coming into a stag bar with a hat on was, at that time, grounds for buying everyone at the bar a round of drinks. My friend told her as much. The conversation between them was short and to the point, and let’s just say the lieutenant did not buy any drinks. I liked her style. “Easy,” I warned myself, “no long-distance romances, and don’t get involved with anyone here.” We got married June 30, 1973, in the chapel at Altus AFB.

Learning to fly the C-141 was much easier than I had anticipated. Hitting the books hard made many things easier. By the end of the written phase, I was second in the class standings. Now I feared the instrument phase of the training; I didn’t do any instrument flying while in Laos. But all the time I spent running air strikes, handling my own emergencies, and flying in low visibility just made it easier to handle the airplane while taking care of all the “emergencies” the instructor threw at me. My biggest problem was delegating—telling the copilot to do things

and not doing them myself. After taking the final check-ride in the plane, I was still number two in the standings, and I finished as a distinguished graduate of C-141 Upgrade School.

I was put on a fast track to upgrade to aircraft commander because of my total flying time but was taken out of the upgrade program when the war ended in February 1973. This was because back then, the Air Force had more pilots than it needed. I put in a date of separation, hoping to get out of the Air Force and go with one of the major air carriers. The big glitch in my plan was that the Arabs had closed the spigot on the oil, and the airlines were laying off pilots—not hiring them. After adding an Airline Transport Pilot rating to my pilot's license, I flew charters for a year, hoping that the economy would improve and the airlines would begin hiring, but the oil embargo put the economy in a tailspin. Discouraged by the prospect of flying for the airlines, I talked to an aerial applicator in Tracy, California,

about working for him as a crop-duster. He hired me in July 1975, and I started my career as a duster pilot. I am currently in my 32nd season as an aerial applicator.

When I look back on the old days, I'm proud of my achievements. I even have a few souvenirs. I received four Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) awards and earned 21 air medals for the number of missions I flew, which included two authorized missions into North Vietnam in support of search-and-rescue operations of downed pilots. I was also given an award not many other pilots in Southeast Asia received. It was the "Order of the Able Aeronaut" award, given to a pilot who recovered an aircraft that was battle-damaged or was on the verge of being lost due to equipment malfunctions. It was one of only 120 given out during the decade of war in Southeast Asia. 🦁

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A Home for Smokejumper Stories

by Roger Brandt

It is interesting how one story can influence your life, and this is what happened to me six months ago when I heard some smokejumper stories told by Gary Buck (CJ-66). Most were memories and personal experiences from a time when he worked at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base near Cave Junction, Oregon. I knew very little about this decommissioned base and, like most residents of the community, regarded the old, featureless buildings without much interest. However, as Gary continued to tell his smoke jumping stories, I began to see a measurable glimmer of value in that smokejumper base.

A couple of days later I met Gary at the base and walked around with him listening to his recollections at the place where they happened. Standing on the tarmac outside the parachute loft, he described what a smokejumper crew did when the fire alarm sounded. I began to feel the tension of the moment for those who were getting into an airplane to jump into a burning forest with no predictable outcomes and subjected to an unimaginable assortment of life threatening situations. It dawned on me that each jump is a story in the making, beginning from the moment the airplane takes off and lasting through to the moment each individual returns to the base. Smokejumpers make stories that are extraordinarily unique.

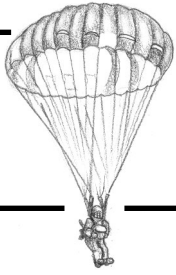
Stories can inspire change, and I am a good example of how a smoke jumping story changed my attitude from indifference to curiosity that has since motivated me to fill out a nomination to designate the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base as a state historic site. Preserving the historic integrity of the base is one objective, but its location on Highway 199 makes this an equally important point of

interest for travelers, about a million annually. My primary interest in the base is to preserve opportunities for families to learn about great things that happened in this region, but the potential economic contributions this base can also make to the local tourism economy is compelling.

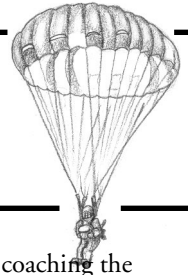
The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was one of the oldest bases in the nation and represents a unique episode in the history of southwest Oregon and northern California. It is a place of extraordinary stories reaching back to WWII when smokejumpers risked their lives to defend the home front, a contribution that is today barely acknowledged. However, the preservation of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base is more than just saving buildings. It is a measure taken to assure there is a home for the stories and memories of this base that will always be available for future generations to discover and find inspiration, just as I did six months ago when I heard my first Siskiyou Smokejumper story. 🦁

Roger Brandt is author of the Highway 199 Traveler, a website advocating family-oriented learning experiences and healthful outdoor activities along the Highway 199 travel corridor in southwest Oregon. The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was one of the features along this travel corridor that inspired the development of the Highway 199 Traveler website: <http://www.highway199traveler.com>.

A special acknowledgement goes to Wes Brown (CJ-66) who is credited with almost 20 years of deflecting attempts by County Commissioners and developers to tear down the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base.



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Got an interesting note in the comments section of a recent merchandise order from Bill Fogg. "My Dad, **Bob Fogg**, was the Manager of Johnson Flying Service's McCall operation from the mid 1940s to the mid 1970s and spent many years flying Smoke-jumpers into fires in the Idaho back country with Ford Tri-motor and Travelair 6000 Aircraft. Pilots **Jim Larkin**, **John Slingerland** and former jumper/ jumper pilots **Gene Crosby** (MYC-53), **Dave Schas** (MYC-48) and **Ken Roth** (MYC-46) all worked for him out of McCall. Our Family was lucky enough to become a part of that smokejumper / pilot fraternity that continues to exist after all these years. We have many fond memories and pictures of the many Smokejumpers our Dad flew to fires and worked with over the years."

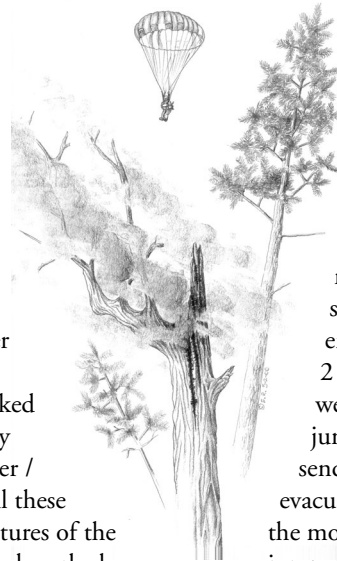
I was checking with **Cindy (Wallace) Super** (MSO-98) to see if she had received her issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Cindy was stationed with the U.S. Army in South Korea and had just changed to a stateside address. "I did. Thank you very much! My husband and I have been assigned to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, the home of the 82nd Airborne Division. Is there more jumping in my future? I've trained to jump with the military before. I can say, I'd MUCH rather be falling out of airplanes with smokejumpers! Not as many folks in the air. I can handle ground obstacles; it's another thing to have obstacles that can pull a riser slip right at you."

Chuck Pickard (MSO-48) made it through the hurricanes OK; "We rode out the storms at home and survived with minor damage. It hit us at 145 mph and many people are without a permanent home right now."

Caught up with **Fred Cramer** (CJ-59); "My wife, Carol, and I are involved in a few renewable energy projects in eastern Oregon. Our company, Commercial Funding Group, is providing some of the funding. The main office is in Lake Oswego, Ore., and we manage the Baker City office."

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77) is a very proud parent these days. His son, Keith, has been selected to the All-County, All-Conference and 1st Team All-State Wyoming High School football teams. In addition, Keith was listed among the top 25 players in the state. Several colleges are looking at him. He could end up playing for the Grizzlies at the University of Montana.

Hal Werner (NCSB-48) is moving north from Lane Community College (Eugene, Oregon) to take a job as assistant Track Coach at Pacific Lutheran in Tacoma,



Washington. Hal has been coaching the throwers at Lane for the past three years and will have additional responsibilities at Pacific, as he will handle the vaulters also. **Jim Gordon** (MSO-59): "As a first time writer to you, I want to compliment you on the magazine. It is well organized and well edited and should encourage many more members to join the NSA. I only jumped one season, but consider it the most fascinating and enjoyable experience I ever had short of fathering 2 daughters. After my training and five fire jumps, we were called on to experiment with helicopter jumping. The fire season slowed down, other than sending jumpers to Yellowstone to help with evacuation due to the earthquake. I don't remember the model of the copter, but there were three or four jumpers inside. The copter lowered to about 10 feet from the ground and we jumped out with instructions to roll as if landing with a chute. We made 2-3 practice jumps and by then the season was almost over. I do not know if this was implemented into firefighting or not, but it was prior to Dirk Chandler's story in 1964. Not keeping up to date with reunions and not receiving the newsletters, I have forgotten the guys' names that jumped with me that summer. Maybe others will read this and have better memories. I know **Fred Donner** was in our group, but don't remember if he jumped from the choppers or not.

Keep up the great news work, and I look forward to many future magazines."

Starr Jenkins (CJ-48): "Thanks for another superlative issue of *Smokejumper* (Jan. 2005). It was nice to see my old article from the 1955 issue of *Cavalier* magazine on Len Krout. I remember that the magazine changed my title from "My Most Embarrassing Rescue" to "I Jumped Into Hell." Guess the editor wanted to save space and be more sensational. Nice to see **Jerry Linton's** photo from the 2004 reunion blended into that article."

Smokejumpers have landed in Europe. **Pat Scheid** (MSO-58) sent along a picture of four McCall smokejumpers published in a November 2004 issue of a Portuguese weekly magazine. There is no photo credit or ID's of the jumpers in the picture. The caption reads "Elite North-American firemen who fight forest fires."

Just got a call from **Gary Buck** (CJ-66) who wants to tell all Gobi jumpers to mark June 16-17-18, 2006 down for the next Cave Junction reunion. We had a great time at the last one so be sure and make this one.

Pete Briant (RDD-00): "I left the BLM smokejumpers in August for a structural fire job with the City of Reno,

NV. It was sad to leave the jumpers. I will take with me some amazing memories and, more importantly, some great friendships, along with the pride of having worked with the best wildland firefighting organization in the world, the smokejumpers.”

Bill Joyner (MSO-53) forwarded an interesting photo of a t-shirt that his son brought back from a recent cruise to the Grand Cayman Islands. The front logo is “Big Johnson Smokejumper-Jump ‘em and spray ‘em.” Back logo is “Big Johnson Smokejumpers-Chop Through the Brush and Jump While She’s Hot.” There has to be someone out there who knows the story behind this t-shirt.

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71): This Noel I took my family to Baja to surf, kayak and swim with the sea lions. While standing in a checkout line in Baja Sur, a man came up to me and asked, “Were you a smokejumper?” I answered in the affirmative after remembering I was wearing my NSA ‘60 Years’ t-shirt. He said, “That is impressive.” I thanked him for his thoughtful remark and this started a conversation. It turned out he is a well-known author, lived in Oregon and thought much of the jumpers.

After I rookied in 1971, I returned to the Univ. of Utah and proudly wore my SJ t-shirt to classes. Except for my buddy, who broke his leg that season and was on crutches, it seemed very few on campus even knew what a smokejumper was. Even my friends couldn’t really delineate between a smokejumper, a smokechaser or a smokefly perdido.

That has dramatically changed in 34 years, and I give much credit to the jumpers, NSA and SJ authors for telling the world about our profession.

I am now in my third career as a grant writer. When asked by new acquaintances what I did in my ‘other lives,’ my answer is, “I was a smokejumper.” Invariably my wife of 21 years, Deborah, rolls her eyes back, gives me that incredulous look that a spouse of 20+ years can give, and says, “Jerry, over a 30-year period you taught 22 courses to over 1000 students K through university. You have won national and state awards for your teaching. You are still writing education grants and your jumping career was six seasons of a 14-year fire career. Why do you always put jumping first?”

“It was the highest calling.”

Just in from **Steve Smith**: “For the past two years I have been shooting a documentary for the USFS. The show titled *The Greatest Good* is now finished. It’s a remarkable and high quality documentary about the 100-year history of the US Forest Service. I shot it in High Definition so it can be projected in movie theaters.

Smokejumping is part of that history and part of the documentary. **Fred Brauer**(MSO-40) is interviewed about that period of time when the FS went from Smokechasers to Smokejumpers. In any event, many who read Smokejumper magazine also work for the USFS. I think there is much to learn from this

well-produced history.”

From NSA President **Doug Houston** (RAC-73): “**Bruce Ford** (MSO-75), age 53, is another in a handful of current smokejumpers who is approaching 300 fire jumps. He started at Missoula and stayed there through the 1991 season, then transferred to Fairbanks BLM where he still returns every spring. He has totalled over 500 jumps with more than 280 fire jumps.

Bruce is a very unique individual, who probably has lost more brain cells than I have/had, which means that he is a smart guy. He “hobbies” in art, mathematics, beer-bottle collecting, reading, and travel. He speaks Chinese and spent a year living in China. He also speaks Spanish and is fluent in Russian.

January 12th he left for Russia. This is one of several trips that Bruce has taken to Russia. Three or four trips have been sponsored by the US government. Bruce will meet **Bob Schober** (MSO-95) and tour St Petersburg and Moscow before heading to Siberia. They will take a month long trip touring the country and the many smokejumper bases along the Russian/Siberian border. Included will be visits to many of his smokejumper friends that he made during his previous trips. His hopes are to find some of the older jumpers for interviews and research the aerial fire protection service gaining historical information on the Russian smokejumper program. This he will share with us in articles for the Smokejumper Magazine.”

So, stay tuned and the best to Bruce and Bob on their travels.

In the last couple issues of this magazine, **Mike Hill** (WYS-95) has been recounting many of his adventures as he travels the world. An update from Mike: “I’ve just come in from Cambodia’s bush. I am still in South East Asia and was clear of the Tidal Wave area. I have instead been out in remote parts of Cambodia over the holidays seeking out the last of the Asian river dolphins and traces of the ugly wake that Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge left behind.

I’m in Vietnam now. Last year (2004), to my surprise, I found myself completely outside of the USA. I left the USA in the fall of 2004 to work on my writing in Australia while I waited for my loadmaster contract with an African L-130 contactor to start up in the Sudan in January. It fell through. I stayed in Australia refining my writing and television projects. I headed off to the wilds of Indonesia for a handful of adventures before the annual time fell for me to return to smokejumping. As it turned out, I was burned really badly in a motorcycle accident in East Timor, unable then to fight fires for the 2004 summer season.

Finally, strong and well again, I returned to South East Asia and started again where my previous story-collecting expedition had left off. Since September I have been moving around here exploring the often-troubled remote corners of Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and now Vietnam.” 🍄

More on Willi Unsoeld (Cave Junction '50)

by Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

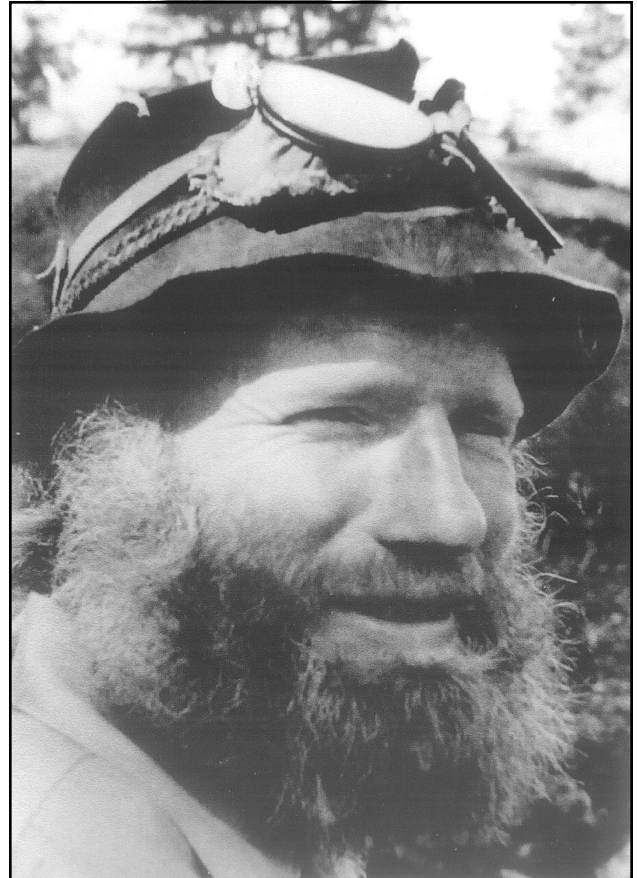
Last year **Bob Moffitt** (CJ-48), retired M.D. from Springfield, Oregon, wrote a great short article on his fellow Cave Junction jumper of 1950, **Willi Unsoeld**. He told how Willi became perhaps the most famous smoke-jumper of all by being the first to climb Mount Everest by the nearly impossible West Ridge Route. But Bob had known Willi long before Willi became a one-season smokejumper. Bob and his fellow Cave Junction jumper **Joe Kaarhuus** (CJ-48) had been childhood friends of Willi (then known as Bill) as they grew up together in Eugene, Oregon. They were friends in grammar school, high school, and college and did a lot of mountain climbing together. While in college, Kaarhuus and Moffitt became rookie jumpers and jumped for several seasons. Much later, after Willi's death, when a biography of Willi came out in 1982, Bob Moffitt eagerly got a copy. As he read through it, he jotted down many notes in the margins, many agreeing with the author and others disagreeing with him.

After publishing that strong article about Willi in *Smokejumper* last year, Bob loaned me his copy of that book. And it was a great read. So here is my review of that biography by Laurence Leamer. The book may now be out of print, but you may be able to find it in some libraries or on the Internet.

Ascent: The Spiritual and Physical Quest of Willi Unsoeld, by Laurence Leamer. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. 392 pages, \$17.50. With 25 photos plus a National Geographic sketch-map of Mount Everest.)

In 1963, Willi Unsoeld, a little-known Pacific Northwest philosopher and mountain climber, became one of the first pair to climb Mount Everest up the impossible West Ridge route. Before and after that extraordinary feat he spent his life seeking high adventure, true Christianity and ultimate spiritual truth. His true life story is like a novel of the glories, dangers and tragedies of the seeker who, while not turning his back on marriage and family life, is yet constantly going his own way in pursuit of the meaning of life through risk-taking, contemplation and ever-new adventures.

In 1964 Laurence Leamer was a new Peace Corps volunteer reporting for his assignment in Katmandu, Nepal. There he first met Willi – Sargent Shriver's pick as the new director of the Peace Corps in Nepal. "To most of us Willi was not only a conqueror of Everest, but a hero, a mountain mystic, a philosopher, a legend about whom we had already heard endless stories." And almost two decades later, Leamer set out to write Willi's life story – to record him for the world for all time to come. And Leamer has done an excellent job.



Willi Unsoeld (Courtesy Jolene Unsoeld)

Here is the man – and his heroic wife, Jolene, and four beautiful children – a man Bill Moyers calls one of the few giants he has ever met. Willi (originally simply Bill) Unsoeld is shown through actions and quotations to be a remarkable, tenacious and audacious individual. Despite being impatient with the rigors of conventional bureaucracy and education, Willi became a scholar, a leader, an inspiration to most people he encountered and a constant developer of cooperation among fractious individuals – in short a peacemaker and a true leader on many expeditions and enterprises. He did his best to live what he preached: the importance of always taking risks, seeking great challenges and striving to be a day-to-day practitioner of agape love.

Of course, Leamer shows us in detail the epic Everest climb, a little-known sidebar to the first American expedition to the top of that greatest of mountains. He also tells of Willi's many other climbs and journeys and his successful pursuit of degrees in theology and philosophy.

Another important climb for Willi came with his oldest daughter, Devi, named for Nanda Devi, a beautiful high mountain in India that Willi had seen but never climbed. When Devi was 22, she, Willi and some other climbers traveled to India to climb that peak (25,645 feet high – the highest in India). Little did they know that tragedy would strike their expedition.

Willi's climbing impacted his academic life. After being an executive and spokesman for Outward Bound, Willi became one of the pioneering faculty at the experimental Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington. There he helped set up and teach new systems to get students to understand life and their roles in it. In all this Leamer shows clearly Willi's points of greatness, yet also his many weak-

nesses, his triumphs, his tragedies, and his fatal obsessions.

All of these qualities are illustrated by his final, fatal trek at age 52. This involved taking twenty-eight Evergreen students on a winter climb of 14,410-foot Mount Rainier. Very dangerous avalanche conditions prevailed. After days of bad weather, traverses, winter bivouacs, and one perfect day of sunny climbing, the party was turned back from the summit by a huge incoming storm. As Willi led them back across a snowy slope, a rumbling avalanche came out of the fog. Tragically, Willi and one student suffocated under the snow. The rest of the students were able to make their way down on their own, singing a song of memorial for their fallen heroes. 🕯

The following article was published in the December 1, 2004 edition of The Washington Post. It describes one man's goal of becoming a smokejumper and the path he followed.

Maryland Marine Killed in Iraq Battle

The 21-year old Poolesville graduate dreamed of being a smokejumper. Dickerson, MD / Cpl. Kirk Bosselmann, 21, wanted to be a smokejumper, a firefighter who parachutes into wildfires to battle the flames. He moved to California soon after graduating in 2001 from Poolesville High School, but soon found he needed extra skills to do his dream job.

To get the necessary training, Bosselmann joined the Marines. There he could train with parachutes and get other experience he'd need to become a smokejumper. He quickly discovered that he loved being a Marine, according to a high school friend, Mike Phillips.

"He didn't like sitting still," Phillips, 22, said Tuesday. "He wanted to do his part to protect his nation."

A scout sniper in the Marines, Bosselmann was killed Saturday in Iraq. The Pentagon released few details on his death, saying only that he died in "hostile action" in Iraq's Anbar province. He was based at Camp Lejeune.

Cascade Folly

by Lyle Rogers (McCall '47)

The events described here took place over 50 years ago. Some of the details have become fuzzy with time but the main events are true. There are some that would argue that these events should not be resurrected but would best be forgotten. They are, however, part of the colorful history of smokejumping, and I believe should be recorded for posterity before all of those with knowledge of the events are dead and gone.

It was a quiet Sunday morning at the McCall smokejumper camp in early summer of 1950. The fire danger was low, there appeared to be little probability of fire action, and the bosses were all home with their families. Now one thing that young smokejumpers can not tolerate is a peaceful and quiet situation, especially when you get a group of them together. Contrary to popular opinion, when smokejumpers get together, their minds do not turn to girls but to parachute jumping. The talk on this occasion got around to free-fall jumping. None of us had ever made a free-fall jump, having always been tethered to the jump plane by a static line. Sky diving had not yet become a popular sport, so none of us knew much about free-fall jumping. Several of the boys decided that a free-fall jump would be just the thing to relieve the monotony. **LaVon Scott** (MYC-48) and **Reid Jackson** (MYC-49) volunteered to make the jumps, **Bob Garrard** (MYC-49) decided to join them. Bob had a small, two-place Taylorcraft airplane parked at the McCall airport. **Kenny Roth** (MYC-46), another jumper, volunteered to fly it as the jump plane.

Not having any parachutes of the right type available, they decided that spotter's chutes worked just fine. Scotty and Reid found a couple of

spotter's chutes in the loft that had recently been repacked. The only chute that Bob could find was an old condemned chute on the back shelf that had not been repacked in years. He decided it would probably work okay. After all, what could happen to a chute just sitting on the shelf for a while? They all used the harnesses and emergency chutes from their fire packs.

They decided it was probably wise to keep this activity low key and not make the jumps locally since some people might object. It was decided to move the action to the Cascade Airport about 30 miles south of McCall. Scotty was to be the first to jump, so he and Kenny got in the plane and flew to Cascade. The rest of us drove. Because of the altitude, small plane and heavy load, we arrived well before the plane reached jumping altitude.

When Scotty bailed out, he fell about half way, opened his chute and landed on the hard-packed dirt runway. Now, Scotty was not your average parachute jumper. He played fullback on the College of Idaho football team, weighed about 220 pounds, and had thighs the size of tree trunks. When he landed on the hard surface, he split the back of both legs on the new pair of corduroy pants he was wearing. He later took them back to the store where he bought them and complained about the quality. The salesman gave him a new pair but could not understand why they had split. They never had a problem with them before.

Reid was the next to jump. He bailed out, fell farther than Scotty had and landed without difficulty in a plowed field beside the airport. Each jumper was determined to fall further than the last before opening his chute. About this time, the local



Lyle Rogers (Courtesy Lyle Rogers)

sheriff showed up to observe the activity. He apparently could not find any legal way to stop the action, but he heartily wished that if these young fellows were intent on killing themselves, they would do it someplace outside of his jurisdiction.

It was now Bob's turn to jump. He got in the plane, they climbed to altitude, and Bob jumped out. Bob fell and fell, determined to fall further than the other two jumpers before opening his chute. We finally began to get worried and yelled for him to open his chute. At what seemed like the last moment, Bob pulled the rip cord and the chute opened. A cloud of yellow dust erupted as that old condemned chute popped open, blowing out 8 panels of the chute, and leaving Bob with a badly damaged chute that was bringing him down very fast. Bob quickly realized his predicament and deployed his emergency chute. However, it 'barber poled' and wrapped around the main chute, doing little if any good to slow his descent.

Before Bob landed, he disap-

peared behind a small hill, so we did not see him hit the ground. We ran up the hill anxious to see what had happened. As we reached the top of the hill we looked down expecting to see Bob splattered over the landscape. Instead we found him standing waist deep in water in the middle of the Payette River, calmly gathering up his parachute. It was the only place for several miles around that he could have landed without incurring a high probability of serious injury.

We all sheepishly drove back to McCall, only to discover that a fire call had come in while we were gone and several of us at the top of the jump list had missed a fire jump. They had scoured all the churches and bars in McCall to collect an eight-man load for the old Ford Tri-Motor.

People at the smokejumper camp did not talk much about the Sunday morning in Cascade, nor is it often mentioned at smokejumper reunions. It appears to be one event that many

people would just as soon forget. 🙏

Reid Jackson went on to have a successful career in the Forest Service. His profile graces the cover of the January 2003 Smokejumper magazine. A personal profile of LaVon Scott and his many accomplishments is also included in the same magazine. Bob Garrard now operates a bed and breakfast in Newport, Oregon. Kenny Roth later flew for Johnson Flying Service for many years and is presently enshrined in the Mountain Flying Hall of Fame in Missoula.

McCall's Class of 1958

by Dick Graham (McCall '58)

In days gone by, smokejumpers always looked for ways to extend the employment season. One way to work longer in the '50s was to work "bug jobs." The Forest Service policy was to save a few trees by killing harmful insects rather than let the trees be destroyed by devastating wildfires.

In the spring of 1959 the Forest Service had a bug job on the north side of the Uinta Mountains on the Wasatch National Forest in Utah. The Forest Supervisor must have had a weak moment when he offered five McCall Smokejumpers early season employment at a tent camp at Dead Horse Camp out in the puckerbrush. He probably didn't have a clue as to what he had let himself in for when he agreed to employ **Toby Scott** (MYC-57), **Woody Spence** (MYC-58), **Dick Terry** (MYC-58), **Ralph Bowyer** (MYC-56) and myself.

Toby and I showed up at the Smokejumper Base in McCall early in the spring because the Forest Service had a "special" job for us. We were to drive two WWII vintage bomb carriers to the camp. The closest comparison to a modern vehicle would be a one-ton flatbed truck with an open-air cab. These vehicles were built for power and for use on the flight line - not for speed.

Whenever the "lifers" at the Payette National Forest Supervisor's Office needed a labor supply for some unpleasant task deemed to be beneath their dignity or GS rating, they just looked over the hill toward the Gulag, also known as the McCall Smokejumper Unit.

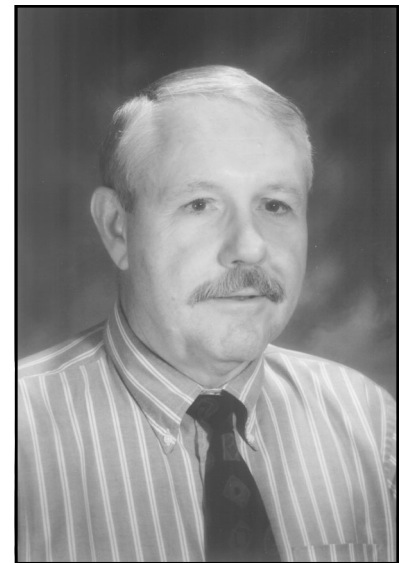
Dressed like early versions of the "Michelin Man" to ward off the cold mountain air, Toby and I jumped in the exposed cabs of the bomb carriers and drove south to Boise. Everything went fine through Long Valley and then Round Valley until we entered the North Fork of the Payette River Canyon. Like most roads in river canyons, there are lots of

curves and few straight stretches long enough for cars to pass. We drove on, with one bomb carrier following the other.

In 1959, most major roads in the U.S. were two-lane with a maximum speed limit of 55 mph. Our bomb carriers were so slow that they didn't even have 55 mph on the speedometer.

General Motors once had a sales slogan - "See the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet." If you really want to see the scenery of the U.S.A., a bomb carrier would be a good choice. We could identify the species of road kill, and on upgrades, a good guess as to its gender was possible.

It's a little known anthropological fact that a large migration of people from the Sandwich Islands settled in Idaho. As most vehicles managed to pass the trailing bomb carrier, the occupants would flash the "Hawaiian Good Luck Sign" to wish us well. And then! - just imagine their blood pressure rising after passing one bomb carrier and finding that there is another one ahead just like the one it took so long to pass. As Yogi Berra said, "It's deja vu all over again." The leading bomb carrier would definitely receive



Dick Graham (Courtesy Dick Graham)

the “Sign” when the car managed to pass it.

After a scenic trip involving long stretches of sagebrush observation , we arrived at Dead Horse Camp in Utah. We were so far out in the brush that sunshine had to be pumped in.

We met up with the jumpers who arrived before us and learned of the mentally stimulating task the overhead had planned. Our job was to run parallel string lines through the woods. During these therapeutic walks, we tied narrow-diameter string to the lower tree limbs for the sprayers to follow. Compasses were held waist-high to maintain our headings.

After several days, we discovered something seriously amiss with our plan. Our string lines did not run parallel. Lines crossed and re-crossed each other throughout the woods.

The people doing the spraying found this to be a bit confusing; the camp supervisors were less than thrilled with our work performance. It took a while, but eventually we discovered the reason for the string lines looking like spaghetti gone berserk. Like the saying goes, “Even a blind hog finds an acorn once in a while.” And even smokejumpers have been known to solve their own problems occasionally!

Standard work attire of this era included hooded sweatshirts with a kangaroo pouch in front. The pouch was a convenient storage place for snuff cans. Now, it’s an established scientific fact that metal makes compasses do funny things - just ask any child with a magnet what it can do to a compass. The snuff cans made the waist-high held compass do unusual things. Who said Smokejumpers aren’t too bright!

About this time, the camp supervisors realized it was wise to have the five of us work together so we couldn’t contaminate any of the other workers. We were provided with a Willy’s Jeep station wagon for transportation.

Now, for the next couple of paragraphs, I’m going to use the plural pronoun, “we,” just in case the statute of limitations for activities of a possible criminal nature haven’t expired.

It’s well known that dirt roads are really muddy in the spring, and barrow pits are really, really muddy. We (notice the we) managed to get our vehicle stuck one sparkling spring day. Problem 1 - we had no shovels (even if we had been inclined to do a LOT of shoveling). Problem 2 - we

might be there a LONG TIME before another vehicle comes by. Problem 3 - we might be there a LONGER TIME before anyone at the camp misses us enough to try and find us.

Yes, we have several problems, but a solution is close at hand. Down the road there was a small John Deere crawler tractor which someone was using for logging Lodgepole Pine for post and poles.

Part of my misspent youth was spent hanging-out at a feedlot. The adult male employees would let a kid without a driver’s license play with the “big boy” toys - front end loaders, ten-wheeler dump trucks, and especially a D-8 cat with a dozer blade. Like the saying goes, “The only difference between men and boys is the size and cost of the toys.” I know - you’re way ahead of me, but be patient - it gets even better!

It was no trick to get the tractor started and going down the MIDDLE of the road to the Jeep. Extracting the jeep from the goo was no problem. Then, back down the MIDDLE of the road I go (Oops! Forgot to use we) to return the machine to its original position. One problem solved, but a couple of other problems now appear.

First – we need to disguise our “borrowing” a machine without permission. Western movies and TV shows often show a leafy branch used to dust-out tracks. This ploy may work in the movies, but is not a workable solution here. First, the road is muddy, not dusty. Second, we would need some really BIG branches to cover up tracks that look like a prehistoric monster made marching down the MIDDLE of the road. Lastly, it’s time to head back to camp so we won’t be late for supper.

As we load up and head for camp, we discover some “minor” damage to the Jeep’s frame that may have occurred while pulling it from the mud. Looking out the driver’s side window, we could see the road in front. Scuttling down the road sideways like a crab, we found this situation hilarious. Upon closer examination, we saw that the frame had been seriously bent. They needed to start making vehicles “Smokejumper Proof,” just like some items are now made “Child Proof.” Once again, the camp supervisors are not convinced our employment has been cost effective.

No one seems happy. The owner of the crawler tractor is not happy. His machine has been “borrowed” without

USFS Retirees Reunion

John Marker wants to remind all of you Forest Service retirees about the upcoming Forest Service Reunion in Portland, Oregon from September 4-9, 2005. You can find more about the gathering: www.oldsmokeys.org

The Pacific Northwest Forest Service Retiree Association invites you to come visit the Northwest in 2005 for a gathering of Forest Service retirees and friends. Registration package will be

mailed early in 2005, but don’t wait, mark your calendar now.

Headquarters are at the Double Tree Hotel, Jantzen Beach in north Portland on the bank of the Columbia River, across from Vancouver, Washington. The hotel is an AAA triple diamond, has plenty of parking, easy to reach from Interstate 5 and a short distance from Portland International Airport. The Jantzen Beach RV Park is within a quarter mile.



Dressed and ready for the Cowboy Bar: L-R: Dick Terry, Ralph Bowyer, Toby Scott and Woody Spence (Courtesy Dick Graham)

permission,. The camp supervisors are not happy with our treatment of the transportation they assigned us. At this point the camp overhead probably began crossing off the days on the calendar in anticipation of our departure from their beloved camp.

For some reason, we traveled through Ogden on our way back to McCall. After a long Spring in the hinterlands, some imbibing of spirituous beverages seemed like a good idea before our departure the next morning.

I went to high school and junior college in Ogden, so I was familiar with a dispensary of alcoholic libations where the bartenders were not M.I.T. graduates with degrees in higher mathematics. There was no need to worry about running afoul of local liquor laws for underage drinking.

We left the bar in the wee hours of the morning after an evening of good fellowship and decided that a neon beer sign outside the door would make a spiffy addition to the McCall barracks decor. Some capers require a lot of planning, some don't. Our plan took about 30 seconds to evolve and finalize. Rapid decisions can be made when brains are well lubricated.

This was our plan! Phase One - get the car and stand by, close to the door with the motor running. Phase Two - hold the bar door closed and remove the sign. Phase Three - run like hell with the sign, jump into the car and drive away at a high rate of speed, staying off the main thoroughfares just in case there may be some "hot pursuit." Phase Four - laugh like crazy and congratulate each other on the success of our latest escapade. As a man once noted, "Don't you just love it when a plan comes together!"

We planed to head to McCall the next morning, but after considering the previous evening's activities, an early departure to McCall seemed like a prudent decision. Best not to push your luck too hard or too often!

It was good to be back in McCall for refresher training

before the start of the fire season. McCall has always been a destination of the rich and famous, but establishments existed where the "real people" would hang out. Two of these establishments were the Forester's Club for serious drinking and the Doghouse for these not interested in fine dining. There was an alley running in back of these side-by-side establishments. This alley was convenient for activities other than deliveries and garbage pickup.

The previous summer, Toby and a local gent had had a pugilistic encounter and Toby wanted a rematch. After the trip out in the alley with his opponent, a victory lap down the main street of McCall seemed like a good idea. Unfortunately, the vehicle was pointed in the wrong direction. No problem! Just throw her in reverse and back down

Main Street. Local law enforcement was more tolerant of some activities in the '50s, but some peccadilloes were not ignored. After his victory lap was cut short, Toby ended up as a guest in the local lockup.

Now we have a problem! Toby was scheduled for a refresher practice jump in the morning, and it would be difficult to pull off from a cell. **Ken Hessel** (MYC-58) and **Bob Rawlings** (MYC-58) shook me from a sound sleep, during the early hours of the morning, and said they need \$200 to get Toby out of jail. (Notice how '58 keeps coming up? A vintage NED year!) Smokejumpers generally show up in the spring without any cash available until the first payday. In those days \$1,000 was about the total payout for a good fire season, so \$200 was a significant amount of cash. Since I had been on the spring "bug job," I had the cash. I gave Ken and Bob the money and decided to sort out what had happened in the daylight.

There is a fine line between being inebriated and being hung over. Toby came down on the still inebriated side of the line the next morning. Toby wasn't the first smoke-jumper to go out the door without being in full control of all his faculties, and I know he hasn't been the last one.

The smokejumper overhead, with full agreement by the local authorities, decided a change of scenery would be a good idea for Toby' summer. That's how he ended up jumping out of Idaho City in '59 and '60. It had been an interesting spring, and now the real job of fighting fires was getting started. 🍷

Dick jumped Idaho City from 1958-65 and graduated from Utah State University in 1965. He went to work for Intermountain Aviation in the fall of 1965 until 1973 with stints in Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Alaska and Arizona. Dick went back to school in 1989 and got his teaching credential and is currently a 4th grader teacher in Payette, Idaho.

A Hurricane Story

by Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

This is a hurricane story for the benefit of all you west-coast smokejumpers who were never privileged to take part in one. Florida suffered four hurricanes in 2004. "Frances" came into the lower part of the state about September 5, 2004, with sustained winds of 105 mph, gusting to 125 mph. Rainfall amounted to as much as 12 to 15 inches. Power was out for some 250,000 homes and remained out for as long as a week. Briefly, there were some 100 miles of coastal destruction

Having left my cool cabin in Minnesota, I arrived back in Vero Beach about the 18th of September. The subdivision where I live is located on a narrow strip of land, referred to as the "island." It is actually a peninsula some two miles east of the mainland and accommodates the beach highway.

The storm caused damage in the neighborhood amounting to windows blown out, lots of shingles torn off, some structural damage, lots of water damage, and downed trees. The subdivision streets were littered with downed trees. All of our streets are owned by the residents of the subdivision, so the cutting and clean up began. My house was standing and in otherwise good condition. My home is built on poured concrete columns 10 feet above a concrete floor that serves as a carport. Twenty five years ago, I built the house with hurricanes in mind. I had double strapped each stud, top and bottom, and every roof rafter was likewise double strapped.

The clean up continued. Chain saws were running constantly, everyone helping each other. Phone lines were out and cell phones, in most cases, useless. Thankfully, the county utilities were able to maintain water pressure in the lines, which saved the day, considering the heat and humidity.

Hurricane "Jeanne" then entered the picture with warnings about her irregular travel in the Caribbean. Needless to say, this pending threat awakened an already tired, and in some cases, homeless population. Early on September 24th, a state of emergency was declared, followed by a "watch" and then the "warning." Jeanne was headed for the coast!

By this time power had been restored to most homes in our community and air conditioners were humming again. Some phone lines were in service and cell phones were working again. But once again the shutters are put up, food stuffs stocked, store shelves emptied, and evacuations ordered. The storm shelters are reopened. People head in all directions. Some chose to drive inland, others outward bound for Georgia, etc. Most of us wanted to believe we couldn't be hit again.

Winds began to pick-up in the early afternoon of the 24th, blowing at 5-10 mph. The "island" was ordered evacuated. We and two other families on the end of our lane decided to stay and ride it out. Our houses sustained little damage with Frances, and we felt secure in this decision. Traffic ceased on the island as of noon. We made our last minute preparations

tying down everything that might possibly fly. By 6 p.m. winds were coming across at 40 mph. The battery powered radio had been on constantly, reporting last minute preparations and the latest position of the storm. Candles and kerosene lamps

were at the ready. At 8 p.m. the wind was a steady howl at 50-60 mph and beating rain came with it. At 9:30 p.m. the lights went out and stayed out for the next eight days. By 10 p.m. the much feared "sustained" winds of 120 mph began the roar. Tree limbs, broken shingles from neighboring homes and even a plastic skylight hit our home at this time.

The radio reported the "eye" of the storm hitting the island some 25 miles south of us and traveling twice as fast as storm Frances. The wind was, by now, driving rain through the smallest cracks around the windows. Between midnight and 2:30 a.m. on the 25th, wind gusts of 140-150 mph, with torrential rain, stabbed at the settlement. The walls of our frame house actually flexed during those hours. We could only hope and pray that our well-built home would stay together.

Winds declined from this point on, and when daylight broke the scene was heart breaking. More trees down, palm fronds filled the streets, and broken lumber was scattered on the ground and in the oak trees. Rainfall reached another 12 inches and with the ground still saturated from Frances, the added rain flooded the surrounding streets. This resulted in losing many of our 100 year old oaks; they just fell over. Seven homes, closer to the beach, completely blew apart. Only the foundations remained. Pieces of heavy timber from certain homes actually traveled 400 yards. One roof, still intact, traveled some 150 feet and lodged up against another. Personal belongings, broken lumber, curtains, insulation, shingles, dry wall, and twisted shrubbery littered the neighborhood. Elsewhere, the mobile home parks took a terrible hit. One in particular lost 450 homes out of 1000.

Meanwhile, the island was cut off from all traffic for the next three days. We all lived on canned beans and canned whatever, and all the thawing food from the freezers. Everybody was helping everybody. Good old FEMA arrived within days and passed out the famous blue roof tarps. At this writing (Jan. 7, 2004), the southeast Florida coast is a sea of blue from the air. Laura Bush came into this particular area, and with her crew, passed out bottled water and MRE meals. Quite an innovation and, I might add, not bad either. They are a far cry from



Chuck Pickard (NSA file)

the “K” rations this marine lived on for two weeks one time ... a long time ago.

The chain saws started up again. We cleared the roads, picked-up the belongings, and showered in cold water. Gradually work crews came in, and on the 8th day here comes an imported electric crew from Minnesota that restored our power ... that was a surprise. Land phones remained out of service for another two or three weeks. Cell phones began to fill the

void as the towers were repaired.

The damage was heavy in southeast Florida. In addition, what was broken apart or loosened by Frances, Hurricane Jeanne finished the job by completely demolishing the structures. This part of the state remains in limbo even now. Roofers and contractors in general are premium. We have been through quite a few hurricanes in Florida, but none have matched Lady Jeanne. 🌪

Smokejumper Stew

by Steve Carlson (Idaho City '62)

It was cool and crisp that summer morn
As we headed for the plane.
An evening thunderstorm had come
With precious little rain.

There was no rush for the four of us,
As we climbed into the plane.
This was a dawn patrol to determine
Whether we would jump again.

We flew around for about an hour
In that smooth morning air.
When suddenly Smokey shouted
“Hey boys! Look over there!”

The old Twin Beach turned hard left
As we headed for the fire.
All four of us were trying to see
If the situation was dire.

We craned our necks to see
The fire down in the trees.
The smoke was coming straight up,
For there wasn't any breeze.

It was more than two could handle
That was plain to all.
It would take the four of us
That blaze wasn't small.

The jump was good in that morning air
And Smokey's spot was keen.
We all landed in the meadow
Not a snag nor rock nor tree.

We hit the fire a mighty lick
We surely did our best.
With Pulaskis, saws, and shovels
But that fire put us to the test.

We worked through morning coffee
We kept going right past lunch.
That fire, it kept us hopping.
We were a tired and hungry bunch.

It was almost dark when we could tell
We had it beat down fair.
We took a break and looked around
And breathed deep that cool, evening air.

“What's for supper?” asked the Ned.
“Smokejumper Stew.” I said.
“It's what we always get
When the fire is put to bed.”

We hunkered down as usual
And checked our fire packs
To see what each would offer
To our tasty evening snacks.

The cans came out of our fire packs
To put in that jumper stew.
Someone had a can of baked beans,
That's a good start, it's true.

Another had a can of corn.
Here comes a big canned ham.
I brought out some mushroom soup.
This is starting to look grand.

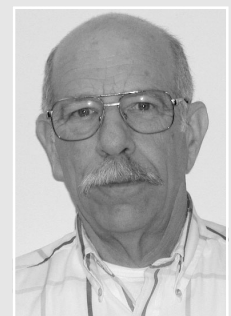
One can had lost its label.
“Well, let's see what's inside.”
“It's about too dark to tell,
Must be potatoes trying to hide.”

All this and more went in a gallon can
With the top cut almost out.
Mom sure would wince to see
What had become our big stew pot.

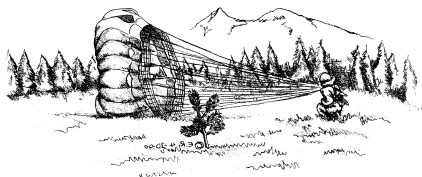
“Hey, man, I'm really hungry.
Is that stew pot just about done?”
“I can hardly see a thing.
Let's flip to see who's the first one.”

The stew was finally hot
And none too soon for me.
We dished it up into our cans
As we sat around a tree.

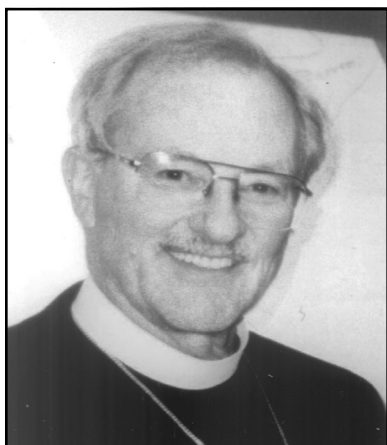
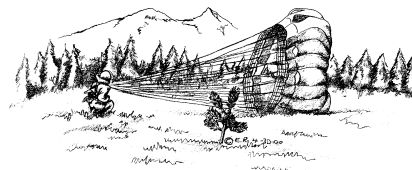
What the hell's in that pot?
We all had real strange stares.
It doesn't have to be light now
To tell that them spuds is pears.



Steve Carlson (Courtesy
Steve Carlson)



Checking the Canopy



by Rev. Dr. Stan Tate
(McCall '53)

Every Voice Has Significance

The following address was given by Stan at the Missoula 2004 Reunion Memorial Service:

“There are many voices in the world and none of them is without significance.”

1st Corinthians 14:10

I WANT TO THANK THE NSA Reunion Committee for asking me to give this address. It will be my last one.

Fifty years ...I'm just getting my life together. Two weeks ago Lynn and I celebrated our 50th Wedding Anniversary. A few years ago we dedicated a monument in Helena to the 1949 Mann Gulch Jumpers. I began jumping in McCall 51 years ago. The first jumper to die in action was Malvin Brown, almost 60 years ago.

Lynn and I recently moved from Moscow to Boise Valley. I couldn't locate the books I needed for this homily. Therefore I will honor smokejumper voices from my experiences as an Episcopal Priest.

“The Voice of the Lord is powerful . . .and full of majesty.” There are many human voices and “none of

them is without significance.”

Today I want us to reflect on hallowed voices related to smokejumping. Pause for a moment and listen to past firefighting friends. Those were exciting times which many of us older jumpers can only cherish since we can't do it again. These memories are golden and eternal.

Last week I prayed with Smokey Stover, shortly before he died. I told him I was going to begin this address with his powerful statement of faith. It is framed and hangs on the wall near my desk. He said:

Smokejumpers aren't too smart. They fly over the roughest country with old aircraft and then jump out to fight very dangerous fires. They *trust* many people - the chute maker, the gear maker, the pilots of the aircraft, and many other good people along the way. But behind all of this, there is one other thing that this smokejumper *trusts*: *God*. There are no atheists in jumper camp.

Smokey's voice of trust will always be with us. Walt Rumsey's pleasant voice is one I will always remember. You will recall he and Bob Sallee survived the Mann Gulch Fire.

Walt and I became good friends as we raised our kids together, attending many functions, watching them perform. We talked about his escape from that terrible fire. He was never quite sure why, if there was a reason, he was spared. But his voice of irony is hard for us to consider. I officiated at his son's wedding a few years ago. It was then I learned Walt was not there because he had died in a single engine plane accident and burned to death. Most jumpers, like most combat veterans, sometimes consider the question, “Why me, when others didn't make it.”

Recently Wayne MacGregor, author of *Through These Portals, A Pacific War Saga*, spoke to us in Moscow. I think he was describing many of our

deceased smokejumpers when he spoke about his army comrades:

“He's a man's man. Being a man included self-respect, courage, honesty . . .hard work . . . someone you respected.”

Wayne was awarded a Purple Heart, two Bronze Stars and other medals for combat in battles at Guam, Leyte, Ie Shima and Okinawa. After World War II, Wayne had a sense of fulfillment in bringing to an end the most terrible conflict in history. “Importantly, we realized . . . we'd lost that feeling of selfishness that people so often have. . . *The thing that we were most concerned about when in combat was the guy next to us. There wasn't any way we would've let him down.*”

This is the heart of my homily: Most jumpers feel this way. No doubt Wag Dodge felt this way at Mann Gulch. Roth, Mackey and Thrash put the lives of other fire fighters first. Although we never spoke openly about this smokejumper principle, quietly an inner small voice did. Jesus said the highest ethic in the world, is to lay down one's life for *friends*. The men we honor today exemplify this supreme value. The 30 men listed on our program have been our friends. They would never let others down. And we shall follow their voices and never let another jumper down.

We hear the voice of a hero in **Ken Sisler** (NCSB-57). He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor winner, after dying in Viet Nam. Lieutenant Sisler returned to bring two wounded men back to the platoon area in the midst of heavy enemy fire. They were surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered. Sisler directed the defense including A-1 Skyraiders. He was standing, directing them, when a sniper's bullet cut him down. Without any concern for his own life, he, like other smokejumpers, put the lives of his friends ahead of his own. This is the smokejumper ethic we honor.

At the recent D-Day memorial near Omaha Beach veteran Lt. George Allen recalled the 'hell on earth' experience. He said all he remembers were dead bodies floating all around him. President Reagan at Omaha Beach once said, "The future doesn't belong to the faint-hearted."

Every Christmas Eve Lt. Allen slips out under the stars to spend a moment with his fallen comrades. "I look up in the sky, and I talk with my men. I talk to everyone of them. I've never told anyone about this before, but I'm getting old now (and combat veterans will understand)." We understand when we look at the stars and think of our jumper comrades. Henry Thoreau said, "Why should we live in such a hurry and waste life."

Another smokejumper principle is having fun. It was very thoughtful of you Missoula folks to invite the McCall jumpers over to a wild termination party. We chartered a DC 3, landing just in time for a superb dinner and dance. The delightful nurses from St. Patrick's arrived about the same time for the party. However late in the afternoon the Missoula jumpers had to leave for a raging wildfire. We enjoyed their steak dinner and free drinks. There was plenty to go around since our hosts were called out for the fire. After a wonderful dinner, the dancing began. I was in the middle of the dance floor having a wild time as a jumper, not a priest, when I heard the unmistakable voice of Earl Cooley. Tapping me on the shoulder he said, "It's so nice to have a priest here. We insist you come up and sit with us at the head table."

Goodbye party.

Later I served as Chaplain of the 124th Fighter Interceptor Group. Our pilots flew 'Delta Dagger' F-102 fighters. They were declared too slow for action in Viet Nam. One of the fighter pilots was an Episcopalian who seldom attended chapel. One Sunday, I asked him why. He was not uncomfortable in giving me his reason. He said as soon as his F-102 got off the runway he was entering his church in the sky. He felt especially close to God in the skies of blue. He could meditate in the high heavens above all the feverish activities below. I was impressed. After our conversation he took me up in the jet trainer to demonstrate. I considered this a wonderful world.

There is a world of difference between a fighter pilot and bomber pilot. Fighter pilots tend to be - in fact have to be - self sufficient and independent. The new F-18 Hornet Fighter was designed as an *independent* strike platform. Multi-engine pilots, like the men and women who flew the Tri-motor and now the Twin Turbo props, tend to be more outgoing.

In my book, *Jumping Skyward*, I compared the Tri-motor to the Christian Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Sometimes I think of our three valiant jumpers who died at Storm King Mountain as three engines leading the rest of us by their heroism. When the Tri-motor flew overhead, it resembled not an arrow, but a cross symbolizing God's care for fire fighters. Granted, the Tri-motor was slower than the F-102 or now the F-18, but we enjoyed a leisurely time for fellowship and sightseeing above God's bioscathedral.

There are no better pilots, those who fly us around the forests, like close friends of mine . . . Jim Larkin, Bob Fogg, Gene Crosby and others.

Listen to the devout voice and action of Gene Crosby - a

former jumper, pilot and devout Episcopalian:

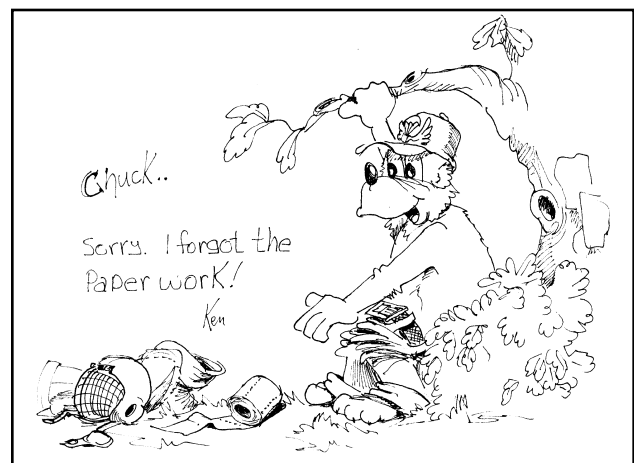
For ten wonderful years I served as Vicar to the McCall Episcopal Church around the corner from the smokejumper camp. One Sunday morning, toward the end of the 7 AM Eucharist, Gene literally came staggering up the aisle. I was serving the Chalice. When I came to him, he took it with one hand and gulped down the whole thing. Then he hobbled out the back door. His clothes were torn and dirty, not like Gene. I wondered if he'd been out with those wild jumpers. After church, the usher told me to get right over to the emergency room and see him. He had been in a serious airplane accident in the Travelaire. In fact, he ended up in the Payette River upside down. I immediately rushed to the hospital. Gene smiled saying he wanted to thank God first for being alive and then went to the hospital. This is a powerful spiritual statement of this highly skilled pilot and distinguished friend.

Jumpers love voices of humor. I remember Max Allen's voice distinctly just moments before we were to jump on a rocky ridge on the Challis forest. Below us there was just one nice 40-foot tree with several jumpers working near it. The voice I heard was this - "*Keep away from that tree because I'm going to hook my chute over the top of it.*"

I was first man out. I figured I'd get to the tree first. Suddenly Max shot by me with his chute folded up. He learned that trick in the airborne. He re-opened above the lonely tree enjoying a soft tree landing. I tried to hook my chute over the top of his but the nylon slid off. I fell through the branches down to the ground. I could hear Max laughing. As soon as I landed, before taking my jump outfit off, I grabbed a pulaski from Bud Philips. I began chopping the tree down with Max about 20 feet above me. He didn't know I was just faking it by thumping the axe blade against the small trunk. A loud voice erupted, which everyone in the Challis forest could hear. It came screaming from the tree-bound jumper. Those words I shall never repeat, especially in a memorial service. I quickly got out of my jump suit and out of his way. Five years later, Max told me it was funny. We all loved Max who gave so much of himself. He died a few years ago. God Bless you, Max, for your wonderful humor.

I respect the voice from a past hero, Ken "Moose" Salyer.

I focused my book around his extraordinary life. Although it might embarrass this unassuming giant of humanity, I sug-



Please renew your membership! (Courtesy Ken Gouff)

gested the Risen Christ could be seen in his generous life. Some people scoff at the suggestion that Christ could appear in the life of a smokejumper. I strongly disagree. Throughout all my years of being with smokejumpers and their families, I've observed more genuine spirituality and love than I've seen in any other organization, including organized religion.

Ken died after dropping fire packs to his friends near the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. At his memorial service above the river, a Swainson hawk landed near us. This 'God-sent' hawk broke off a green branch and soared into the blue heavenly skies above.

One of the premium woman pilots in the backcountry was my close friend, Lyn Clark. She flew me back to Ken's sacred spot several times. Two years ago, Lyn died not far from there in a flying accident. We celebrated her life with a Eucharist at the outdoor chapel of the Episcopal Church camp on Payette Lake. Although I didn't see it, a Swainson Hawk landed directly behind the altar. Toward the end of the service, the hawk broke off a green branch and soared into the heavens above the lake. Just like one appearing for Ken forty years earlier. Are these merely coincidental? No, they were symbols of a caring God.

Dr. Dale Smaljohn memorialized his fellow jumper, Ed Guy, last summer as perhaps the most spiritual jumper he ever knew. I also memorialized him in my book's final chapter. We were amazed to hear Ed's voice at the Redding Reunion, after 30 years of silence. He appeared out of nowhere. I instantly asked him to participate in the memorial service. He accepted. That happened because of God's Grace.

Ed was a social worker and missionary with a Church called the "Jesus Community" in Guatemala. He courageously opposed the death squads, often hiding in caves and forests. Ed mailed me a report shortly after the Redding Reunion about those death squads. Guatemala has been the most violent and repressive nation in the Western Hemisphere, ironically supported by the United States. The death squad government has murdered over 245,000 innocent persons, through 624 documented village massacres. "Las Dos Erres" village was one of those where Ed served.

Ed worked faithfully for freedom and liberty. His voice must have been the voice of God. One month after Ed Guy led the prayers for our Redding Memorial Service, his father called me. The murderous death squads finally caught up with this courageous freedom fighter. He fought for the rights of the downtrodden and will be remembered by all of us who knew him as a Saint of God. He did not die fighting forest fires, but by fighting horrendous human fires of injustice.

Almighty God, the ultimate architect, built a noble and serene cathedral carpeted with trees and flowers and granite spires. This is the living monument to persons like Ed Guy. I call it the 'bios' or 'living' cathedral of nature. Emily Dickinson said, "This is my church and I get along with the Bishop of Nature. She cherished God's Presence in Nature:

Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
I keep it staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister,
And (an orchard) a forest for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;
I just wear my wings,
And instead of tolling the bell for church,
Our little sexton sings.

God preaches, - a noted clergyman, (is he),
And the sermon is never long;
So instead of getting to heaven at last,
I'm going all along!

I stand in awe before the never-ending patterns I imagine in cloud formations. There are clouds like cumulonimbus which alerted us to bad weather. There are fair weather clouds called cumulus which predict a stable atmosphere. Cumulus in Latin means, "heap." This may be an apt description of our hard landings with the older chutes.

Mountain pilot Bill Woods wrote elegantly about clouds during summer flights - "of pink-tinged mountain peaks with green firs robed in ermine white... of soft gray, stratus clouds dissolving before the sun's bright rays...of the pilot's highway...of peace and eternal solitude." He expressed it this way: "If I could write, most of all I'd write about how good human *companionship* is after those flights-hearing a baby's cry, a child's laughter, a woman's smile or friendly touch...Of this I could never write, for I do not have the humble understanding that belongs to God alone."

His beautiful thoughts remind me of hymns of nature, like "This is my Father's world and to my list'ning ears, All nature sings and around me rings the music of the spheres."

A most distinguished American, who wanted to hear me tell her smokejumping stories, told me this was one of her favorite hymns. It happened this way: I was Youth Minister for a Mainline Church near Bryn Mawr, Philadelphia. I was in my old work clothes when Dr. Galloway ordered me to go immediately and call on Mrs. Biddle. I rushed over and the gateman and doorman ushered me into the mansion. There were two women in the huge garden room. Mrs. Biddle introduced me to her friend, Eleanor Roosevelt. Here is the voice I remember from Mrs. Roosevelt; "I always wanted to meet a smoke-jumper and learn how you parachute and fight forest fires." She apologized for having to leave right away to return to New York. What a delightful time we had. I figured Mrs. Roosevelt would make a terrific jumper, but I didn't think Mrs. Biddle would cut it.

It's a wonderful world for smokejumpers. A Scottish minister said:

"Almighty God. . . show to us in everything we touch
and in everyone we meet
the continued assurance of thy presence round us. . .
in every friend we have
the sunshine of thy presence is shown forth. . .
in the temple of thy love."

I hear the voice of God when I walk in the sunshine of the wilderness. John Muir said, "The sun shines not on us, but in us. The rivers flow not past us, but through us...." When hiking through the forests, we become one with nature, not mere observers...one with birds darting among the branches, perhaps

singing with them, "All nature sings and around me rings." My wife Lynn and I watched the American Idols contest. The voice I remember the most included; "I see fields of green, skies of blue...and I say to myself, What a wonderful world."

I will end with my observation of the voice of appreciation. After my book on the spiritual convergence of love and nature had been out a few years, I received a moving letter from Ruth Murphy. One of my jobs in McCall was going out to church camps with a presentation on parachuting. One summer I met a lovely high school girl named Esther Murphy. She asked how she could become a smokejumper. She visited us at jumper camp many times, but in those days women couldn't be jumpers.

Ruth's letter revealed her 30-year-old daughter Esther had a long struggle with cancer. Esther had read my book several

times. At the end, a few days before she would see Christ face to face, she kept my book cradled in her frail little hand. In a faint voice, one of the last things her lovely little voice ever uttered, she asked her mother to read the last page about life after death...that her Redeemer would give her a wonderful new life.

It is indeed a wonderful world, with a *more* wonderful world to come. Esther and our departed smokejumpers know it is a more wonderful world than we can imagine. That last chapter in my book was about knowing God. It ended, as I will, with St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "We look through a mirror dimly in this life but someday we'll see Christ face to face. Then I will know fully, even as I have been known." And I say to myself "What a wonderful world yet to come." Amen 🙏

Remembering Frank Odom

by Denis Symes (MYC-63)

Frank Odom (MYC-63) generally sported a mischievous grin – you could never be sure whether he was laughing with you or at you. He was killed when the Beechcraft Baron (B-28) he was piloting was shot down in Zambia, Africa, on April 5, 1977. He was truly one of the "good guys" who possessed a quick sense of humor and a dry wit.

Originally from Long Beach, California, Frank graduated from the University of Idaho (UI) in 1964 with a degree in Forest Management and was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity. He delighted going home at Christmas and surfing; "It always amazes the surfing crowd to see a "white body" wearing an Idaho T-shirt keeping up with them," he once observed.

Frank jumped from McCall in 1963-65 and formed a key part of the UI contingent of jumpers. I recall that Frank, **John Rasmussen** (MYC-59), **Ray Roark** (MYC-63) and **Jim Swartley** (MYC-63) formed the nucleus of this group, and they shared a group "party house" on Payette Lake's eastern side. Jim recalled that Frank once visited him at the University of Washington while Jim was in

medical school and they went to a sports car race at the Seattle Raceway. The cars were a bit faster than his tan 1961 Volkswagen!

During the '60s, Frank worked for charter operators performing government-support activities in Southeast Asia (remember Air America?). In the '70s, he flew in Africa, eventually earning a Zambian Commercial Pilot's license flying charter flights for a local air charter company. At the time, flying in Zambia was rather primitive due to unreliable weather reports and limited radio contact once outside major cities. Also, there were several military conflicts occurring in the region, one in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the Namibia conflict, both on Zambia's southern and western borders.

On the morning of April 5, 1977, Frank took off with 6 passengers for a tourist fishing camp on the Zambezi River in far Western Zambia, not far from the Rhodesian and Namibian borders. Fearing aircraft attacks from white-ruled South Africa and Rhodesia, Zambian troops were armed with SA-7 "Strela" ground to air missiles provided by the Soviet Union. To

prevent accidents, the Zambian government also prohibited flying into airfields along these borders without prior authorization.

Upon approaching the landing field, Odom's plane passed over the runway once and then made an approach to land. On the final approach, the plane passed over a Zambian army air defense unit stationed at the field. It appears that the unit had not received notice of the flight. The unit's commander authorized firing a missile, which impacted the plane and blew off a wing – the plane was totally destroyed by the impact. A friend of Frank's, who was also a Consular Officer at the American Embassy, identified him from his reddish-blond hair and his Rolex watch.

The Consular Officer heard from an American friend that Frank often expressed a desire to be buried at sea. The Officer later attended a conference in Mahe, Seychelles – a group of beautiful tropical islands in the Indian Ocean. While there, he rented a sailboat and took the urn containing Frank's ashes several miles out to sea where, reading the pilot's poem "High Flight", he released Frank to the sea.

I can still recall his grin. 🙏

Memories From The Start Of Smokejumping

by Bob Scott (Associate)



Historic Photo: 1940s Letdown (Courtesy Jim "Smokey" Alexander)

The early history of Smokejumping has been recorded, and while many historical facts can be gleaned from the "official" records, they can be dry and certainly do not round out the experiences of the pioneer jumpers. Bob Scott grew up on a ranch just south of the original jumper base in Winthrop, Washington. He worked three summers as a firefighter and lookout, and knew many of the early jumpers. His recollections of this era were written for his nieces and are abbreviated here. Since many of the events overlap each other, chronological events may differ, but recollections such as these round out the history of the Smokejumping program.

I. Frank Burge's Ideas

Frank Burge was a District Ranger on the Chelan (now Okanogan) National Forest. He inspected my lookout station in 1940 and we had a good time recounting experiences, mostly his. This story emanates from our 1940 conversations. Frank joined the Forest Service in the early 1920's and 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 finally extinguished them. Observing the State Game Department dropping fish from planes, Frank thought that aerial delivery might be a good way to supply fire crews, and possibly even deliver them.

The Derry brothers were professional parachute jumpers. The Forest Service contracted with the brothers to develop ways to drop men safely on fires. Through this contract, the Forest Service Aerial Project was started at Winthrop, Washington. The Derry brothers set up a parachute shop in a warehouse at the ranger station. They designed and built jump suits to protect the jumpers when landing in brushy country and parachutes that descended more slowly than those in general use. Also, the parachutes were steerable. The initial class of

jumpers was trained at the Intercity Airport, just south of Winthrop, to parachute onto fires and suppress them.

Frank Burge may have been an old timer in the Forest Service, but he had forward-looking ideas. In 1940, he told 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 from which water could be dropped.

II. The Original Personnel

Barry George (NCSB-73) is now fire assistant at Winthrop Ranger Station and sent me the following information:

The Aerial Experimental Project started in California and was moved to the North Pacific Region (Region 6) area during the summer of 1939. The California tests had involved bombing fires with water. A decision has been made to discontinue bombing tests, and David P. Godwin, Assistant Chief of Fire Control in Washington, D.C., recommended using the unexpended balance of experimental funds to carrying out parachute jumping experiments. The Forest Service prepared a contract for parachutes, protective clothing, and the services of professional riggers and parachutists and, awarded it to the Eagle Parachute Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Experiments were conducted in the Winthrop, Washington area on the Chelan (now Okanogan) National Forest during October 5th through November 15th. The Secretary of Agriculture appointed Beach Gill of the Eagle Company to be a consultant and collaborator.

The Eagle Parachute Company sent Frank, Chet (MSO-40) and Virgil (Buss) Derry (NCSB-40) 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 was located in Englewood, California.

Glenn (Smitty) Smith (NCSB-40) was part of the initial crew since he was one of Frank's California employees. Smitty was a colorful barnstormer and had many free falls to his credit, as did the Derry brothers. Captain Harold C. King served as engineer-pilot and flew the Forest Service's high-wing, five-place Stinson Reliant.

Two Winthrop area men, 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 (NCSB-40) 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. 🦅



Items from the Fire Pack



Smokejumper Ideas Used to Develop Airborne

Our successful jump program attracted the attention of the military. In June of 1940, Major William Lee and six staff officers visited our facilities. They took several of our jump ideas back with them to Fort Benning where they trained the first airborne troops. Lee became the first airborne commander of the 101st Airborne during part of WWII.

Earl Cooley (MSO-40)

Long Trip for Water

Our climbers went several thousand feet down into the canyon, never to be seen again. We retrieved the cargo chute by climbing a smaller tree next to the one with the cargo and climbing across into the larger tree. We ran out of water the next morning, so I volunteered to hike down into the canyon to the stream. It became a mountaineering project of high order, wiggling my way down cliffs and drop-offs to the stream. Filling the canteens, I fought my way back up, making the trip in four or five hours.

David Flaccus (MSO-43)

Down But Not Out

I went to look for the missing Murray Braden (MSO-44). When I found him, he was just coming to his senses and sitting on the ground in a daze. I saw an impression in the duff where he hit after an estimated 40-foot fall from the tree above when his chute collapsed. He had un-snapped his harness before he passed out. His memory was a complete blank from the time we left Missoula but he did remember that he knew someone named Geraldine (his wife). Fortunately, there were no

broken bones and, though groggy, he assisted in putting out the fire.

Dick Flaharty (MSO-44)

Feeling No Pain

We jumped late in the evening and my buddy broke his ankle. He was in pain but not complaining. Rescuers brought in a stretcher and four of us carried him to the end of the trail where there was a horse waiting for our patient. It hurt placing him on that horse, so one of our rescuers pulled out a bottle and told him to drink as much as he could. We had one of the drunkest, happiest Mennonites you ever saw. The horse didn't care about bumping the ankle and the patient was too drunk to care.

Alan Inglis (MSO-45)

More Than a Pain In The Back

We were about to complete our seventh practice jump in our two-week training period. The trainers picked a wooded area and our job was to steer into the clearing. As I came close to the clearing, I forgot everything about my landing position and hit the ground landing in a sitting-down position. I immediately felt a sharp excruciating pain shoot up my back into my head. I was so embarrassed by the poor landing that I didn't report the accident to the infirmary. Seventeen years later, I had surgery for a ruptured disc in my back.

Vern Hoffman (MSO-43)

A Good Deal Fire

The fire was down in the rocks and we would have to wait several days to make sure it burned itself out. One problem was that we did not have enough food for such a time period. From the map it looked like the ranger station was some five

or six hours away. I volunteered to make the hike and call headquarters to ask them to drop some more food. There was no one at the station, but I was able to telephone someone who would make sure we had more food dropped. It was late in the day when I headed back and I decided to hike cross country instead of using the trail. I stopped to sleep that night and made it back to the group the next morning. We got the food drop later in the day and spent several days eating and watching the fire burn out.

Cyrus Johnson (MSO-45)

Might Have Been The First Fatality

Frank Derry (MSO-40), with his colorful language and lifestyle, was an easy man to remember. A former stunt man and one of the nine original smokejumpers, he was meticulous and watched us trainees like a mother hen. When we hooked up our static line, we were trained to make certain that it ran above our shoulder. On a training jump in 1943, I had stood up and hooked up the static line and moved my right foot on to the doorstep. Suddenly I was jerked back into the plane, someone holding me by the collar of my jump suit. Above the roar of the engine, I heard some choice Frank Derry words, and then felt a kick on my backside, which got me out the door. Since I had checked my static line as trained, I was completely confused. When we got to the ground the jumper behind me told me what had happened. The static line had unfolded from the backpack and the prop blast had looped it around my neck. That evening Frank called a safety meeting and we talked long and loud about paying attention to your static line if we wanted

to survive. If it weren't for Frank Derry, I might have been the first smokejumper fatality.

Paul Jernigan (MSO-43)

Someone Else Can Have That Job

Bert Olin (MSO-43) was a great guy and he was a jumper. I was not yet a jumper and was a packer for the Forest Service at Big Prairie. Since the fire season was slow, the jumpers drew straws as to who would have to man the Tillotson Lookout. Bert was

not too happy about drawing the short straw and he did not want to miss a fire jump. After a huge lightning storm came through one night, we could not reach Bert on the telephone. I was instructed to take the mules, water, food and a telephone and head up to the lookout. We could see that Tillotson was hit (by lightning) several times. As I approached the lookout, Bert came running down to meet me. His eyes were bugging out and he could hardly talk. Then he started to tell

me about his escapade while the storm went over. "I followed directions explicitly and got on the old wooden chair with the glass coasters getting as far away from anything metal as possible. Lightning hit the lookout and shook the whole place. There was a ball of fire that came out of the telephone and went right to the stove and up the pipe and right out." He also said that he didn't want a second hitch on the lookout.

Dr. David Kauffman (MSO-45) 🦋

Apocalypse Now-Fairbanks Edition

by Gary McMurtrey (McCall '73)

It was May of 1980 and the eight of us were circling a fire in the Volpar along the middle fork of the Chena River, about 100 miles NE of Fairbanks. The load was composed of Alaska rookies making their first fire jump and Don Sterrett (RDD-74). The rookies were Ken Coe, Glenn McGahee, and Clay "Bomber" Bien. Matt "Blue Leader" Kelley (FBX-71) would be the fire boss, and I was the assistant spotter since Matt and I were the Old Salts.

The fire was just off the river and looked to be a piece of cake. What looked like a bear was squatting right in the middle of a snowfield near the fire. Then we determined the

bear was just a big guy. After the jump, Blue Leader told me to walk out and talk with the big guy about the fire.

The guy, wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans, was squatting in the snow with a .22 rifle, just staring across the river. He looked to be about 300 pounds. I said, "Hi, Pal, what do you know about this fire?" He mumbled something that was either "I killed the son of a bitch" or "I will kill the son of a bitch." I said something like, "Have a nice day," and did a long, slow, walk back to the fire.

I called up, "Blue Lead, we have a problem." He replied, "We've got a problem here, too." The boys were coming across burned up supplies: tents, fuel cans, food, and all sorts of things. And then they found guns. Blue Leader and I started to have wild ideas. We knew we were close to the headwaters of the river, so this could be a mining cache for planes to land. The mining claim was probably upriver. Were we in the middle of a miner's war? That kind of thing wasn't unheard of and the government was never well liked in those situations. We didn't want to alarm the others and told them to gather up all the guns and hide them. Then we asked if anyone was carrying a handgun. No one was. Kind of unusual for Alaska jumpers.

Blue Leader told me to go back to the big guy and see if I could get him to give up his gun and come into camp for some food. I suggested sending a rookie. Kelly didn't agree and I went. The big guy's only words were, "I want a cigarette." At that time, I would have given \$100 for a pack of cigarettes, but, as we know, very few jumpers smoke. I started a warming fire and gave him a box of "C's."

About that time, Aerial Observer Ben Robinson came over in a Cessna. We told him about our concerns and that maybe a bunch of rival miners were coming down the valley bent on revenge for getting burned out. Robinson radioed Fairbanks to send retardant bombers. If things got dicey,



Gary McMurtrey (Courtesy Gary McMurtrey)

maybe they would bomb them with foam. We also asked for the State Troopers to come out. The Cessna was circling when two F-16s came screaming up the valley. They were from Eielson A.F.B. on a training run. The KC97 and the PB4Y came an hour later. I was looking for the State Troopers UH1 coming over the ridge blaring "The Ride of the Valkyries" on loudspeakers. This was getting to be too much. I remember thinking, "I am Robert Duvall and this is Apocalypse Now. The Horror, the horror..."

Ben Robinson said that he spotted a mining camp up the valley. No gunfire and no troops massing. He and the bombers kept circling the area for a few hours before they had to go home. Ben said the troopers could not get there until the next day and told us to make the best of it.

It was getting late, so we started a warming fire. The boys started coming in and the fire was pretty much contained. The Big Guy did not say anything. He just stared into the fire. We kept spraying him down with bug dope to keep the bugs from driving him more nuts. Someone grabbed the gun and hid it, and we kept one guy up all night as a lookout. No jumpers wanted to give up a sleeping bag, so we rolled him up in cargo chutes for the night.

The next morning, we decided to have one jumper take the Big Guy down to the river to pick up firewood. We heard a commotion. Soon Don Sterrett returned pushing the Big Guy ahead of him. Apparently, the guy had taken a swing at Don and hit him. We sat him down by the fire on a cubitainer and told him to behave himself. A few minutes later he got up without saying a word and started rumbling across the tundra. We all jumped him, carried him back to camp and tied him up with glass tape and cargo straps. I guess it is about time to now say that the Big Guy looked

like Marlon Brando—later in life. Mumbles, weight, and all.

A few hours later, the other part of Apocalypse Now was coming about. Two 205s came over the ridge. One was a BLM to pick us up. The other was from the State Troopers. The Trooper put the Big Guy in handcuffs. After conferring with the Trooper, Blue Leader and I got into the copter with him to find the camp up river. We landed on a sandbar next to a small camp, and a guy came out to meet us. He was a geologist from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks and was running his claim. We told him the whole story and, of course, he was distraught. He was doing a favor for a friend and hired a few people from Florida who wanted to go to Alaska and work in paradise. Within a few weeks, almost all of the people wandered off to take the supply plane back to Fairbanks. The geologist said that he and the cook were the only two left. His out-of-state helpers could not handle the Alaska experience.

The last one had left a few days before. We figured that the Big Guy started the fire as a rescue signal to get a ride out. The three of us left the claim and the miner and flew back to pick up the boys. They had broken camp and we all got on the two 205s. The Trooper had the Big Guy handcuffed to the floor rings and **Matt Kelly, Glen McGahee**, and I surrounded him as a guard. There is not much wrap up to the story. More Troopers were waiting for us when we landed at Wainwright and took the Big Guy away in a patrol car. No one found out what happened to him. Just another strange story from the Land of the Midnight Sun. 🐻

Gary spent 23 years in Alaska, 12 as a jumper, three as Fairbanks ramp manager and the rest as a BLM fueller. He retired in 1996 and is living in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Humor on the Yukon

by Lee Gossett (Redding '57)

We all seem to have a great collection of jump stories and yarns of days gone by, and I am no exception. I would like to share with you some of the humorous events that happened to me in the summer of 1966 when I was a pilot for the BLM in Fairbanks flying a Cessna 180.

Now the story begins. There was a project fire burning out west that I was supporting with cargo and crews, and it looked like it was going to last for a while. The fire boss came up to me and asked if I would fly to a village near Kotzebue and pick up a "polk" of seal oil. I looked at him and said, "What is a polk of seal oil and what is it used for?" Turns out the natives had developed a real case of "constipation" and the seal oil was needed to "get things moving" again. When I arrived at the village I proceeded to the

general store and asked for the seal oil and, sure enough, they produced a sewn up seal skin containing the seal oil. I whipped out my Short Form Purchase Order book and wrote a government purchase for the seal oil. The seal oil was delivered to the fire and "things started moving" again.

I then headed for Fairbanks and as soon as I arrived at the office, I proceeded to explain my purchase, as I wanted to be the first one to explain the situation. Turns out the purchase was OK and "things moved along well" on the fire.

A couple of jumpers were dropped on a fire north of Fort Yukon, and I was sent to see if they required any supplies. Sure enough, they radioed me their grocery list that included (get this) a case of dog food. When I inquired as to why they needed a case of dog food, I was told an old trapper came to the fire. They hired him as an EFF and he had two dogs, so



Lee Gossett (Courtesy Lee Gossett)

they required grub too. When I returned to Fairbanks with the request, it raised an eyebrow but they signed off on it, so back to the fire with **Phil Clarke** (CJ-51) as my cargo dropper. We landed at Fort Yukon, removed the door and proceeded on to the fire and made the drop. A few days later I picked up the two jumpers in Fort Yukon and brought them back to Fairbanks. The real kicker was they presented me with an inflated beach ball that was in the case of dog food as a promotional gift. The jumpers wanted me to give it to my “4-month-old daughter” as a toy, which I did.

Later in the season, we had a very large project fire between Chicken and the Yukon border that was somewhere around 250,000 acres. Our staging area was Tanacross and the fire camp was at Chicken. A number of jumpers were dropped on a fire just north of Tanacross on a plateau between my beaten flight path from Tanacross and Chicken. Every time I flew by the fire, I would check in with the jumpers to see if they needed anything. On my first over-fly, I mentioned to the jumper that there was a very large bull caribou not far from the fire on the ridgeline. That afternoon on my return flight, I again called to see how things were going. The same jumper said, “Remember that bull caribou you spotted on the ridge line?” I replied, “Yes,” and was told they were eating him at that moment. Seems one of the jumpers had a 357 Magnum pistol and proceeded to track him down and now the

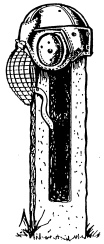
jumpers had camp meat for the duration of the fire.

During that same project fire, I would spend the night at the BLM guard station at Tanacross. It was a very busy place with EFF’s coming and going all the time. One evening I was sitting on the porch, waiting for the steaks to be cooked, when a fellow walked up with a backpack and sat down. We started to have a chat when the cook announced the steaks were ready. I invited him to have a steak. He declined and started to set up the neatest little camping stove I had ever seen to brew his soup and tea. I commented on his little camp stove, and he mentioned in passing it worked well at some unbelievable altitude. My next question was, “Where did you have an opportunity to use it at that altitude?” Turns out this was Tom Avercrombie, a photographer for the National Geographic Magazine. He was the photographer for the American on the Everest expedition and went as far as the base camp. Tom had just come from Afghanistan and was heading to Thailand to meet the Royal family and do an article on Thailand. For years afterward I would see Tom’s name in the magazine.

My six seasons as a smokejumper started in Redding in 1957 and finished in Alaska in 1963. After the 1963 season, I headed to Laos with Air America and spent a year as a “kicker,” all the while trying to get my foot in the door as a pilot. The chief pilot finally told me he had many ex-military pilots to choose from with tons more experience than I had. I packed my bag and headed for New Zealand and managed to land a job crop dusting, or topdressing as they say down there. After New Zealand (and discovering a beautiful bride while there), I hired on with the BLM in Fairbanks as a pilot for a season of bush experience prior to heading back to Saigon and Vientiane, Laos, with Air America as a pilot this time. I flew for Air America for 18 months in the Caribou program and then switched to Continental Air Services, also in Vientiane, Laos, and flew the Pilatus Porter for an additional four years, which brought my total time in Southeast Asia to six years.

The photo of me with the bear cub was taken in 1970 at a landing strip named PS-38 in southern Laos. Just a quick story on the bear cub. The U.S. Air Force CH-53 helicopters would sometimes land at PS-38 and be briefed by the “Agency” guy for an infill/exfill of Lao troops near the border area. One day while sitting in the briefing with the helicopter pilots, “Smokey” came running though the briefing room and out the door. When the Agency guy finished the briefing, he asked if any one had questions about the mission. One helicopter pilot raised his hand and said, “Was that a bear that just ran though the room?” The Agency guy said, “Yes,” to which the helicopter pilot replied, “Thank God, I thought I was seeing things.” 🐻

Lee hung up his wings in May of 2004 after flying his last 60-day assignment. He can be reached at: lgossett@ccountry.net



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.

Frank E. Neufeld (Cave Junction '44)

Frank died October 23, 2004 in Fresno, Calif. He was part of the CPS-103 jumpers during WWII and jumped out of Cave Junction. Frank graduated from Fresno State University and later earned a Masters in Education from the University of Southern California.

He worked 28 years in education serving as a teacher, principal and superintendent. Frank was active in Bible study groups and Jail Ministries. He traveled extensively around the world, visiting missionaries.

Michael A. DeGuire (Missoula '74)

Mike died November 10, 2004 at his home in McMinnville, Oregon. He earned degrees from the University of Montana in math and science and moved to Anchorage in 1978 where he taught and started a music store. Mike moved to McMinnville in 2001 and worked as an accountant for a local hospital.

Bob Fogg (Pilot)

Bob Fogg, former Smokejumper Pilot and Johnson Flying Service Chief Pilot and Manager of McCall Operations, died January 18, 1978 of complications from lung cancer.

Bob was a pioneer bush pilot and perfected his mountain and canyon flying skills under Bob and Dick Johnson of Johnson Flying Service in Cascade, Idaho and Missoula, Montana. From 1944 until 1976, he shared a long and very fond history of flying smokejumpers out of Mc Call, Idaho. During those years, he piloted jumpers to fires in the Idaho backcountry in aircraft, including Ford Tri-motors, Travelaire 6000, AT-11 and C-45 Twin Beechcraft, and in his final years, Cessna 206 Skywagons.

During his flying career, he was the recipient of a 20-year Idaho Safety Pilot and Million Mile Pilot Award from the State of Idaho Aeronautics. He also served as a member of the Idaho State House of Representatives from 1963 to 1965.

Like many smokejumper pilots, he considered it an honor to be a member of the smokejumper fraternity.

Loren "Butch" Hammer (Pilot)

Butch loved to collect experiences. He had gone scuba diving alongside whales, jumped from airplanes and piloted smokejumpers. Recently, Hammer got a job as a contract pilot flying CASA-212 planes – a two-engine turboprop aircraft - in transport missions in Afghanistan for the U.S. Air Force. "He really wanted the adventure and to travel to

new places," said Bend resident Deanna Chambers, who grew up next-door to Hammer in Redmond. "It was the whole package of something different, and that was Butch. He was always ready to try something new."

On Saturday (Nov. 27, 2004), a CASA-212 took off from Bagram Airfield, 27 miles north of Kabul, carrying Hammer and five other Americans on a transport and supply mission southwest to Farah. The plane never arrived at its destination.

According to a statement from military officials, coalition forces launched an immediate ground and air search for the missing plane. They finally tracked transmissions from the aircraft's emergency locator device to a mountain range in Central Afghanistan. There were no survivors.

Butch Hammer was born on Nov. 26, 1969 in Needles, Calif., where the family lived before settling in Redmond. Hammer became an Eagle Scout and joined the U.S. Coast Guard for a short time after graduating from Redmond High School in 1988.

Hammer earned his pilot's license and, in 1997, he began flying airtankers for Butler Aircraft during wildfire season. Most recently, Hammer spent summers flying smokejumpers out of Winthrop, Wash.

Information from Alisa Weinstein *The Bend (Oregon) Bulletin*.

Rudy J. "Skip" Stoll (Missoula '51)

Skip, 72, of Whitehall, Montana, died Saturday, Dec. 25, 2004, of pancreatic cancer. He was born on July 9, 1932, and graduated from St. Ignatius High School and the University of Montana. While at the university, Skip was a member of ROTC. He later attended basic infantry officers training at Fort Benning, Ga., and graduated first in his class.

Skip then worked as a pharmacist in Great Falls, Bozeman and Butte before returning to Whitehall to manage Whitehall Drug, where he worked until his retirement.

During the summers of his university years, Skip was a smokejumper. He was an NSA member. Upon his retirement he worked on trail maintenance crews in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Skip was an avid University of Montana football fan, missing games when only absolutely necessary. His "Go Griz" sign became a fixture on Interstate 90. 🐻

We ‘Doff Our Hats’ to Roy Emerson Wenger CO Administered Jumper Camps During WWII

by Jill Léger

Roy Emerson Wenger was a pacifist and an educator, an accomplished choral singer and a seasoned world traveler. He was also a quiet pioneer who lent his vision, skill and patience to a host of start-ups over the years—including, back in 1943, the struggling new smokejumper program, then on the verge of becoming another ill-fated wartime casualty.

Wenger passed away in Missoula on November 30 of last year. He was 96.

He was a lifelong pacifist, born a Mennonite and deeply proud of his family’s farming heritage, which primed him for a life of service. “As food producers,” he once reflected, “we felt needed and important.”

His Ohio childhood was marked by World War I, and by the young men in his community who served their country without bearing arms. They were known as “conscientious objectors,” and their good works dazzled the young Wenger, who longed to emulate them. Later he’d write that these mentors “taught me many things, but especially that if you do your work as skillfully as you can, if you prepare yourself academically to the best of your capacity and if you are patient with yourself and others, you probably have a chance at doing some of the world’s important work in spite of the fact that you are a CO.”

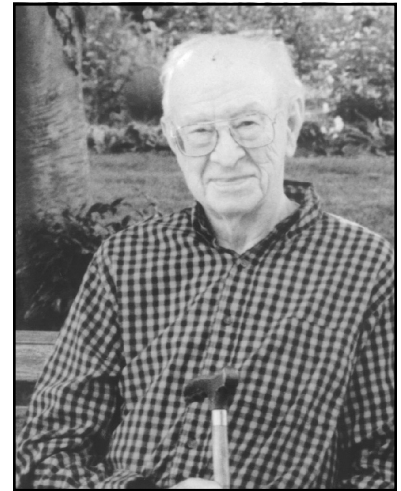
It was a lesson he’d draw upon at the start of World War II. After an eight-year stint teaching high-school history, he had just scored a job at Ohio State University’s Bureau of Educational Research when he was drafted. Wenger chose to pursue CO status—an option afforded him by virtue of his religious beliefs. An acquaintance told him the decision would ruin his career, but Wenger knew better. “None of us

really know whether it will ruin my career,” he replied. “And we hope that will not happen.”

Declaring oneself a CO was by no means an easy way out. The 43,000 COs of the Second World War were routinely scorned—dismissed by many as cowards, “yellow bellies” or worse. But their contributions were invaluable. More than 20,000 were assigned to non-combat military duty, many facing enormous danger as unarmed battlefield medics. Thousands of others, including Wenger, served with the new Civilian Public Service, a network of public-service camps funded and administered by pacifist churches and organizations. Wenger and his new wife, Florence, soon moved to Colorado to work at a CPS camp near Colorado Springs.

Six months later, he got a juicier assignment and was recruited to direct a training camp affiliated with the U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper Project, then a four-year-old trial program operating out of Montana. The opportunity appealed to him on several levels. For one thing, operating such a camp represented work of “national importance”—not “national impotence,” which is how **Phillip Stanley** (MSO-43) once described many CPS projects back then. The five-dollar monthly allowance was generous. And perhaps most important to Wenger, the camp offered men the chance to, as he put it, “risk their lives in a cause for the benefit of humanity as a whole.”

Wenger’s skills were sorely needed. The demands of war had all but obliterated the smokejumper program, and by the spring of 1943, the Forest Service was looking at a total workforce of five jumpers. To build up the unit’s ranks, the Forest Service had successfully lobbied to make smokejumping an approved form of CO service, letting



Roy Wenger August 2000 (Courtesy Lillian Wenger)

it tap into the manpower of the CPS.

Selectively chosen from CPS camps around the country and rigorously trained, more than 200 COs served as jumpers during the war years, manning nearly the entire jumper program from 1943 to 1945. Wenger served two seasons, administering training camps at Camp Paxson near Seeley Lake and, in 1944, Camp Menard in the Ninemile Valley. As the primary liaison between the Forest Service and the CPS, he played a vital role in keeping the jumper unit afloat, selecting recruits and strengthening the program with his leadership.

But like COs around the nation, Wenger and his colleagues faced their share of denigration. It turned out not everyone in the jumper program liked the idea of hiring COs. When **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) first heard about it, for example, he considered joining the army before the first group arrived.

Cooley stuck around, however, and would later document some particularly harsh treatment. “Some felt conscientious objectors should not eat at the same table in the cookhouse with

the regular employees,” Cooley noted in his book *Trimotor and Trail*. “One man got up in the cookhouse and said that anyone who would eat at the same table as a conscientious objector was not very damn patriotic. Others felt they should be treated like dogs and at the same time expected them to give 100 percent effort.”

(For his part, Cooley was impressed with the new recruits, noting in his book that the Mennonite farmers on the squad, “refused to admit exhaustion; they were used to working hard from daylight to dark.”)

Wenger felt the sting. “It’s a humbling experience to suddenly discover that you’re way out of line with everyone else,” he told journalist Mark Matthews in 1995. “All COs had to develop thick skin. What else can you do when an entire community turns against you?”

After the war, Wenger returned to Ohio. He had a new degree (a Ph.D from Ohio State University), a new daughter and a new job at Kent State University in the fledgling field of educational media. Thanks to a Fulbright grant in 1954, he taught in Tokyo, taking his family to live there for three years. Upon his return, he continued working at Kent State, where he developed study-abroad programs based in countries around the world. He helped set up numerous other programs at the university as well, most notably its Center for Applied Conflict Management. Founded the year after the Kent State tragedy of 1970—when Ohio National Guardsmen killed four students and injured nine at a demonstration protesting the Vietnam War—the center focuses on political nonviolence and offers an undergraduate degree in applied conflict management.

The Vietnam War impacted Wenger’s career in another way as well, casting him as a mentor to the many young people who turned to him for counsel. By all accounts, Wenger was sympathetic and generous with his advice, a gifted listener who drew from his own experiences as he helped young men form their decisions regarding war service.

He worked at Kent State until he was 70 years old, retiring to Missoula

to be near his daughter and her family. He became involved with the University of Montana, helping form an educational program aimed at seniors. It was called Golden College, and he took a few classes himself.

Back on Montana soil, he reflected often on those extraordinary wartime fire seasons and did much to keep COs in touch over the years. For three decades he organized CO reunions, chalking up their good turnouts to the power of a shared philosophy. “The belief in a nonviolent way of life is what keeps drawing the volunteers together,” he told journalist Matthews in 1995. “There’s a real camaraderie among these men, just like among men who were in the military.”

Wenger made it to the bigger reunions as well, and was there in Missoula last June, a frail but smiling figure in a wheelchair, sipping coffee at the Sunday morning prayer breakfast beside his second wife, Lillian.

Wenger was also active in helping preserve CO jumper history. As a board member of the National Forest Service History Museum, he “persisted in getting many of us to write brief

bios of ourselves,” noted **Tedford P. Lewis** (MSO-43). “Roy has been our chief advocate through the years...making certain that [our] service...was captured in the annals of smokejumping.”

Wenger’s own legacy will live on as well. It resides in the minds and hearts of the young people he counseled during the Vietnam War, and of those who today are seeking ways to minimize violent conflicts around the world at the Center for Applied Conflict Management. It lives in friends like Lewis, who, in a recent letter to fellow jumpers, wrote: “As you pass, Roy, we, the men of Civilian Public Service 103, doff our hats and give thanks for your sharing your life so generously with us, and with so many of God’s creatures.”

And it lives in these words Wenger himself wrote in 1995: “With continued good leadership and a continued spirit of never giving in to temporary setbacks, I believe we can organize a warless world for ourselves and our grandchildren. Never give up! Peace be with you.”

And with you too, Roy. Godspeed. 🙏

Save The Jump Records

Bob Schumaker (MSO-59) needs some help.

The NSA Board of Directors has proposed that an effort be made to convert the Master Action Sheets of all the bases into compatible computer files that can be put on the web site and be accessible to all NSA members. I accepted the job to coordinate this daunting task.

Missoula and McCall have already done quite a bit of work on transferring their Master Action Sheets on to Excel spreadsheet formats. Leo Cromwell has transcribed a lot of McCall’s and some of Fairbanks’ records.

I am looking for volunteers who would be willing to help in this difficult and time-consuming task. This work wouldn’t necessarily have to be for the base where you jumped.

I can be contacted in the following ways:

Bob Schumaker, 1304 Westwood Drive, Hamilton, MT 59840
(406)-363-0364 or bobcat@montana.com

Lights are on But Nobody's Home

by Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)

The establishment was called the Star Dust. There wasn't much sign of stars, at least not the Hollywood type, but there was plenty of dust. We had just gotten off the Eagle Fire, so we didn't much care about dust. After using Jack's barn at the R & R Ranch as a command post, a Star Dust Motel room didn't sound too bad.

The problem was that the five of us had been standing here at the Star Dust front desk waiting to take possession of our dusty rooms for quite a while. It seemed that Mr. Smith in front of me wasn't content with his room. Something about a big hairy grey spider on his pillow. Big deal! When Ed, our Facilities Unit Leader, sat down in the outhouse at Jack's ranch, he was greeted by rattling noises. When he stood to look into the hole, two very angry sets of eyes glared at him from the dark. He must have put the lights out on a party. He decided to do his business elsewhere.

Mr. Smith's complaint was concluded with the slam of a door, and it was my turn to step up to the plate. The Ump was a largish woman. She looked like she was ready to take on those two rattlers.

"Hi," I said innocently. "I've come in from the forestry office down the street. They said you have five rooms for us."

"Not yet."

"They said you were expecting us."

"Yep. Your rooms ain't ready."

"But it's three-thirty."

She gave me a "are you hard of hearing" look. "They're not ready yet. You'll have to wait."

Besides our own trucks outside, the parking lot was empty. The parking lot looked lonely, baking in the bright desert sunlight. It roasted in the kind of sand-blasted eeriness you'd expect of a desert motel parking lot. The Star Dust Motel sign creaked in the breeze. A neon light buzzed softly. Flies moved about lazily, looking for a place cool enough to land. Thirty or forty motel room doors emptied into the parking lot waiting for occupants. The town seemed devoid of life except for the five of us and the lady behind the desk. And, of course, Mr. Smith, who was hurrying off in a cloud of dust.

"You don't have any rooms ready? It looks like you have a lot of rooms."

"Yep. Yours will be ready in about an hour."

That didn't sit well. I tried to think of something intelligent to say. "Hey, how about if we just take some of the rooms that are already clean?"

"Nope. Don't work that way." The phone was ringing incessantly, but the matron made no move to pick it up.

"Oh." I felt like adding: "Hey, how about if I just strangle you?" But instead I said "Well, I suppose we'll just wait. We could wait out there in the sun, with the flies, but we'll just wait right here and keep you company instead. Hey, guys, did I tell you the one about three donkeys and the Mexican whore?"

This seemed to stimulate some cranial activity in the bland face before me. Her jaws worked up and down in a sort of fish-like motion. She rotated slowly and scanned the nails that contained thirty or forty keys hanging in neat rows behind her. She scooped up five keys and transferred them to my outstretched hand. We moved rapidly toward the same door Mr. Smith had just used, but with considerably more triumph.

I hurried to my new room for a shower. The door was open. I closed the door, and picked up the TV remote, eager to see if this motel had X rated movies. The TV wouldn't turn on, though. I dropped the remote and reached over to the set and punched the power button. The TV came on, but the remote channel selector didn't work either.

Giving up, I stripped off my dirty clothes and entered the bathroom. There was a problem. Cold water ran from both the right and left spigots. I put my pants on and walked out into the parking lot, ready for the second inning. Having second thoughts about doing battle half-naked, I decided maybe I'd better put my shirt on. I put the key in the room door, and turned it, but it refused to open the door. I decided to take on my hostess without benefit of a shirt.

I arrived just in time to hear another tired traveler arguing with the Ump about reservations.

"Your reservation ain't in our computer. You sure you made reservations?"

"Yes, ma'am, I did. But if it doesn't show up in your computer, can't I just have a room anyway?"

"Don't work that way. This is our busy season. No reservation, no room."

"But you have lots of rooms."

"Sir, I assure you that you do not have a reservation in this motel."

I knew this might take a while. He might have to wait for his room to be cleaned.

I cut in. "Ma'am, could I please just have a room with its own key, a TV that works, and hot water?" I think my voice was an octave too high, because both the traveler and the Ump looked at me strangely.

The phone started ringing again and the door banged opened. In came another gentleman. This guy looked like



Historic Photo: 1940 practice jump at Seeley Lake R.S. (Courtesy Jim Alexandeer)

he just emerged from a mineshaft or a jail cell, or both. He scowled at me. I immediately guessed that this could either be my hostess' spouse or the armed-and-dangerous outlaw we'd been hearing about on the radio.

His bride said to him, "Let this dude in his room, Bubba."

Bubba turned ponderously in the door. I decided to follow him. Bubba looked grumpy, like he had been on another mission, so I unwisely decided he might be a better person to address my concerns about my room. "Hey Bubba, I need a key, some hot water, and maybe a new TV remote."

Bubba was moving slowly. Possibly a hangover. The tail of his shirt was out and it looks like it had the residues of his last meal smeared on it. A hole in the shirt revealed that his jeans had slipped way too low on his backside. Not pretty.

He muttered back in my direction, but seemed to address the entire empty parking lot, "Sir, all I can say is that I just got off shift." That seemed to be intended to explain everything.

I repeated my complaint. "But I need a key, some hot water, and maybe a new TV remote."

Bubba may have felt that he hadn't expressed himself adequately, so he turned and gave it to me a little more

slowly and patiently this time. "Sir, like I say, I just got off shift." His sizable fists clenched and unclenched.

I agreed that this might cover it. Maybe I could take a cold shower and make out without a remote for the TV.

Actually, staying in a Star Dust Motel isn't so bad if you ignore the rattlesnakes, cold water, lack of keys, and testy motel employees.

I did try one more time with the TV remote, though; I left a hopeful note on my pillow for the maid. "Ma'am, if it's not too much trouble, could you look into the problem with my remote TV control?" When I got back to my room that night, the bed was made and the remote was gone. 🐼

LETTERS

Editor,

I enjoyed reading the well-written story, "The Legend of Black Water Canyon," in the October 2004 issue of *Smokeyjumper* magazine. It was well composed and written, and I enjoyed reading it, but you should have labeled it as fiction, which it is. Enjoyable reading, but should be labeled as fiction-nothing more.

Clayton Berg (MSO-52) 🐼



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (FBK-96)

Three feet of snow cover the shack in January as temperatures plummet to 67 below zero. It's hard to believe the state is recovering from its biggest wildfire season on record.

The base is quiet as our dedicated crew of rookie trainers gears up to welcome 8-10 recruits in April 2005. Led by Ty Humphrey (FBK-98), the training cast of Derek Patton (RAC -00), Jim Dibert (FBK-99), Randy Foland (FBK-01) and Chris Swisher (FBK-03) run the roads of Ft. Wainwright together whenever a heat wave shoots the mercury above -50 F. Most Alaska jumpers opt for warmer climates during winter, but each year a devoted handful of bros remains to work and play in God's country.

In November, Matt Allen (FBK-95), Jason Dollard (FBK-03), Randy Foland, Mike Lambright (FBK-99), Tony Marchini (FBK-01), and Jeff McPhetridge (MYC-93) traveled to Prince William Sound to hunt blacktail deer, renown for their abundance and exceptional flavor.

Soon after, Robert "Sure-Shot" Yeager (RDD-92) drew a Kodiak Island Brown Bear tag. At about 100 yards, Yeager brought down a grizzly measuring nine-feet, nine-inches tall, employing his trusty Ruger 338. Also along for the hunt to bag more blacktail deer were Matt Corley (FBK-97), Marty Meierotto (FBK-94), Derek Patton, Togie Wiehl (FBK-91) and Dave Whitmer (FBK-92).

Jay Wattenbarger (FBK-92) traveled to Africa last fall to successfully hunt "some kind of weird Antelope," according to Bill Cramer (NIFC-90). Wattenbarger also provided table fare for the bros last season during leaner times on large fires, bagging delicious grouse with his .22 pistol, greatly improving our dinner menu.

In training news, Bill Cramer spent many winter hours transferring historic videotape to DVD, featuring highlights and lowlights from the late 70s and early 80s when Alaska transitioned from the round canopy to the Ram-Air system.

Most notable in the "What the hell were they thinking?" category is footage featuring the folly of 'para-ascension,' when jumpers were pulled high into the skies above Ft. Wainwright from speeding carts, tethered at the harness by what can only be imagined as an umbilical cord of terror. This training tactic was mercifully scrapped before the general public could say, "Who'd want to be catapulted off a perfectly good cart?"



Also in the realm of entertainment, Joe Don Morton (RDD-95) is being courted by the producers of NBC's "The Bachelor". Following his appearance in December's *Outside Magazine*, Morton soon began screen testing for NBC and may consider an offer to appear on the popular TV show. His fellow smokejumpers wish him the best, fully understanding why he just may be ready for primetime. When assigned to film practice jumps, Morton never hesitates to turn the camera on himself during breaks in the action - the results usually evoking waves of head shaking and laughter.

Proving that image isn't everything, Morton spent six weeks last winter chain-sawing brush and trees in Delta, Alaska, amid -20 F temps, until the project was

halted by contractors. Conditions proved unfavorable for the wood-chipper and chainsaws. Joining Morton on the project were equally hardy Jim Dibert and Derek Patton.

In January, Bob Schober (MSO-95) traveled to Moscow, Russia, to meet up with Bruce Ford (MSO-75). From there they planned to head for Siberia, touring Russian Smoke-jumper bases and meeting with comrades of Ford. As of this writing we can only wish them the best of fortune on their travels.

Ty Humphrey and wife, Jennifer, were thankful they didn't change their itinerary while in Thailand last December. Scrapping plans to travel to a 'more comfortable villa' on the western coast and electing to remain on the east side of Koh Tao, a smaller island on the country's peninsula, the Humphreys were well out of harm's way when the tsunami struck. They safely ferried to the mainland before bussing to Bangkok.

Blessed with the birth of their second child are John Dibert (FBK-96) and wife, Maxine. Christopher John Dibert was born January 9, weighing 7 lbs. 13 ounces.

First-time parents Sean Phillips (FBK-01) and wife, Allison, welcomed Jackson Henry Phillips on October 30, weighing 8 lbs. 4 ounces.

The Alaska Smokejumpers regret learning that at least three of our best jumpers won't be returning in 2005. Sean Phillips and family are moving to Kansas, to share their bundle of joy with nearby relatives.

Ryan "Fancy-Feet" Ringe (FBK-02) plans to start an arborist business in Seattle. Ryan insisted by phone that I mention "that he was Alaska's jump king for two of his three seasons."

Pete Stephenson (RDD-98) plans to pursue a career as

an arborist in New Mexico and I will miss **Pete** as my conscientious neighbor in Ft. Wainwright's finest barracks accommodations on Apple Street.

In related news, our brand-new, asbestos-free AFS communal mega-barracks, resembling an enormous warehouse with windows and nearly abutting the Army and MP dormitories, is slated to debut this spring – and we're all just simply waiting on pins and needles.

Grangeville Base Report

by **Robin Embry** (GAC-85)

It's mid-January here and there is precious little snow to be found in the hills outside of town. I would like to predict that the biggest, baddest, driest, hottest fire season ever will be happening here this summer, but I'm sure that all the snow we're not getting now will be coming down in April. See: "NSA Smokejumper – July 2005" for more details.

Jerry Zumalt (RDD-70) retired from the Forest Aviation Officer position in the beginning of January and will be helping resolve the problem of fish overstocking in certain lakes on the Nez Perce. **Randy Nelson** (GAC-87) is taking a 120-day detail into the FAO position. **Brett Rogers** (GAC-92) will be filling in as base manager behind **Randy** for 120 days.

We are working on filling a squadleader position, several permanent seasonal positions, and also hiring a couple of rookies for the 2005 season.

Lots of changes, as usual, happening both in the 'fire world' and the 'smokejumper world.' We're just struggling to keep up with it all. I'm sure there have been other times in the history of smokejumping when it seemed that changes were happening too quickly to keep up with, but coupled with the other changes occurring right now in the Forest Service organizational structure, we're fast becoming outflanked.

Ah well, I know by the time you're reading this in April, we will have jumpers returning from all of their off-season adventuring, high-fiving each other after the first refresher jumps. Fire season 2005 will still be an unknown- like a great big unwrapped present under the Christmas tree, and all these ramblings will be forgotten and consigned to a dreary winter day in January.

Missoula Base Report

by **Keith Wolferman** (MSO-91)

Happy New Year. MSO continued to stay busy with project work last winter. The Asian Long-horned Beetle eradication project hosted three groups of six people in New Jersey through early December. We anticipate more activity this spring as new outbreaks keep popping up.

We put together three staff flights, using our DC-3 and consisting of 45 people from six different forests in Region One. They flew to the "Thirty-Mile incident" on the Okanogan N.F. This was a 'lessons learned' type of activity, and an eye-opening experience for those involved.

We have been fielding quite a few folks to assist the local BLM unit in Missoula with thinning, burning piles, etc. This was good for both parties, as it provided late-season

work after a slow fire season, accomplishing goals for a unit in need of a local work force.

We supplied six people to the Great Northern Type II crew in November as fill-ins. They completed a severity assignment to Region 5 and accomplished quite a bit of project work during the thirty-day commitment. Five people conducted prescribed burns in North Dakota for the North Dakota Prairie Grasslands in November for two weeks. We sent seven folks to the Black Hills in South Dakota on burning details, and another to write burn plans.

In late January and early February, we had two groups of five folks heading to the National Wildland Fire Academy in Sacramento to instruct S-290 intermediate Fire Behavior classes.

We currently have ten people in North Carolina clearing trails with crosscut saws to aid in hurricane rehabilitation. **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO-75) is acting as operations chief, **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) is a safety officer.

We have six groups of people slated to be in Mississippi on prescribed fire details to four different forests from January through late March.

Margarita Phillips (MSO-88) recently attended the USFS Centennial Congress in Washington D.C. for three days, serving as a representative of Region One.

Our loft is continuing to assist **Pat Wilson** (MSO-80) of MTDC with development of FS-14 modifications. Test jumps were made in January, using a new soft toggle steering system.

We are also sending 3-4 people to Jacksonville, Florida, to attend the 2005 Parachute Industries Association Symposium January 14-18.

Todd Onken (MSO-82) continues to move forward with his efforts on the Joint Parachute Project and has hopes of having prototype canopies for evaluation jumps soon.

We have scheduled three senior parachute rigger classes for FAA employees this winter/spring, and our manufacturing room continues to crank out goods in support of our regional fire cache in the form of hose bags, chainsaw tool kits, wall tent repairs, etc.

And finally, we had a number of folks get out and hunt this season, **Dan Helterline** (MSO-89) drove up the Alcan Highway to Alaska, rafting his way down an interior river and bagging a 67-inch moose. He was later joined by **Jeff Kinderman**, and they got themselves a couple of pretty nice Caribou. Others didn't fare as well, with an extremely mild fall and lack of tracking snow.

We are finally getting some good weather and snow at the local areas as the skiers are licking their chops and waxing up their boards!

McCall Base Report

by **Eric Brundige** (MYC-77)

McCall started off the new year with the arrival of our new base manager. **Frankie Romero** (MYC-89) took over the reins after working as a zone FMO on the White River NF in Colorado for the past four years.

Also back this year for one more PT test is **Barry** "this is

my last season” **Koncinsky** (MYC-74). **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98)) is currently detailed into the assistant training officer position behind **Larry Wilson** (MYC-84), who accepted the training officer position vacated last year by **John Humphries** (MYC-79).

Jumpers **Steve Bierman** (RDD-89) and **Cheri Dailey** (MYC-98) are back after being on leave of absence in 2004. Also with us this year is **Brett Bittenbender** (MYC-88), who was hired back from GAC this past winter to fill a vacant squadleader position. Other jumpers not with us this season include **Shelly (Allen) Lewis** (GAC-97), who is working a fuels position on the Council District of the Payette NF and new mother **Kasey Rose** (NCSB-89) also working in fuels on the Payette. **Ryan Garber** (MYC-00) will be detailed to the Sawtooth IHC this summer.

We are expecting to have 70 jumpers based in McCall again in 2005. Final number, as always, will be determined at the end of rookie training. We are expecting about 8 rookies to complete training in June.

We will have the same fleet of jumper aircraft, the two Twin Otters, J-41 and J-43 and the Turbine DC-3, J-42. J-43 is expected to be the aircraft going to Silver City, New Mexico, with the R-3 contingent to support the May through July southwest fire season. J-42 will likely be the ship sent to Ogden to support our spike-base operation there. That base will likely open around mid June.

The pilot ranks will again be changing in McCall. Our “Special Ops” pilot, **Matt Harmon**, is retiring after 13 years in McCall dropping jumpers, and one of our relatively new pilots, **Lance Johnston**, has been called to active duty in Iraq, where he flies a C-17 Globemaster. **Lance** has been with us for the past two seasons. With any kind of luck, we may occasionally see **Matt** and Captain **Andy (Marc Anderson)** both back in the cockpit this summer, and are anxious to see **Lance** back as soon as possible.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by **Charlie Wetzel** (WYS-92)

After a slow start to winter and hardly any snow through Christmas, we are finally getting some accumulation. With about two and a half feet over the New Year’s weekend and more predicted, the skiers and snowmobilers are happy.

On a sad note, our office manager **Bill Colman** died from a rare brain disease in early December. **Bill’s** experience as a crop-dusting pilot, fire patrol pilot, dispatch assistant and computer expert made him invaluable to our organization. He will be sorely missed.

Greg Anderson (MSO-68) officially retired (mandatory) on January 3 and has taken another job with the State of Montana, plowing snow on the section of highway 191 near his home at Gallatin Gateway.

Things have changed quite a bit in the last four years in West Yellowstone with the retirement of “Bright Eyes” **Bill Craig** (MSO-66), “Chicken Man” **Bill Werhane** (MSO-66), “Tuna” **Chuck Flach** (MSO-68) and now “Melon Head” **Greg Anderson**. For a base that has never had more than twenty active jumpers, (19 in 2004) we have lost quite a lot

of experience.

We are currently in the selection process for a new training supervisor and loft foreman and should have those positions filled by the end of January. The base managers position is also currently up for grabs and will hopefully be filled by spring.

With budget constraints and bureaucratic inertia it has been a long, slow fight to increase our numbers and upgrade all of our smokejumper positions to what is designated as the national standard, but we are gradually getting there.

Jennifer (MSO-01) and **Mark Belitz** (WYS-01) had a baby boy named **Jadon Lakota** on September 28. **Mark** won the pool for guessing the date of birth. Insider information is suspected.

Mark Duffey (WYS-98) is currently in Missoula training for his master rigger certificate. **Mike Nelson** (WYS-04) is on a hurricane relief detail to North Carolina for three weeks. **Carlos Trevino** (WYS-92) and **Cindy Champion** (MSO-99) will both be heading to Mississippi soon for prescribed fire details.

Ernie Walker (RDD-01) and **Brian Wilson** (WYS-98) are both ski patrolling at Jackson Hole and Moonlight Basin (Big Sky) respectively.

Billy Bennett (WYS-98) and **Tommy Roche** (WYS-02) are both back at their “real” jobs for the winter, keeping their communities safe - Billy as a law enforcement officer in South Carolina and Tommy a New York City fireman. Hopefully both will be able to swing coming back to the West next summer.

Redmond Base Report

by **Gary Atteberry** (RAC-97)

It is the middle of January, as of writing this update, and most of the bros are in the middle of hibernation or their winter adventures. The fire season left us a little early last year - around late August, early September, but never mind, it was a lousy one anyhow.

Redmond jumpers had no problem transitioning right into project work. A more promising prospect is any day in the woods, rather than a day in the loft, wearing down the vibram on your soles. Burning, hand-piling, and pile-burning were the big projects this year. Folks were in the woods until mid-December, or until it was time to use all that ‘use or lose.’ Redmond also had jumpers back east, climbing trees for aphids.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the snow didn’t drive the bros out of the woods this year - in fact, most of the area is currently way below average snowpack, even after a major storm in January. Knock on wood.

As the holidays wound down and people trickled back to work, the requests for jumpers began. We’ll send our first contingent of three jumpers down to South Carolina in January to start mucking the swamps, and we anticipate having people there until refresher. **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92) is already in South Carolina with his wife. Tony accepted a long-term assignment as a helicopter manager, and he plans to stay 4 or 5 months, while his wife works at the hospital in Charleston as an ER nurse.

The loft is beginning to crank up its production phase of various smokejumper-related paraphernalia. And it seems everyone is trying to catch up with new training or old training that they missed out on previously. **Tony Johnson** (RAC-97) is heading that juggernaut of training, and as of pay period #1, he is Redmond's new training foreman. Congratulations Rookie Bro!

Redmond is planning on basing 35 jumpers here for the 2005 fire season. We'll probably hire 5-6 rookies, but we're always pushing for our 'most efficient number' of 55 smokejumpers here. First refresher begins in April, and rookie training begins in June.

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hesse (RDD-01)

We are gearing up for another fire season and have about 20 jumpers refreshed and on the list. Along with two more refreshers, it looks like 10-12 rookies will be training to fill the ranks this season. The base is selecting the next batch to send to Silver City, while the rest of the jumpers head east for climbing or burning, until fires start breaking after a winter filled with snow and rain.

We're also making plans to head south to San Bernardino for project work. The Redding jumpers established good rapport with the managers in the south zone by jumping seven fires last season on the San Bernardino N.F. The quick response and professionalism during that lightning bust made a positive mark on forests in the south zone, which historically haven't used jumpers in the past.

Jumpers not traveling about last winter received a phone call from **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00), who decided to coach a winter softball team comprised of jumpers. The team name the Hokies, coined after welfare fund guru **Mitch Hokanson** (RDD-00), debuted with a less than stellar performance. After countless errors, the spirits of the team and fans remained extremely high. At one point, **John Casey** (RDD-99) was spotted in our dugout with a hockey stick and pads. Actually, there's a hockey league in the same complex.

Karl Johnson (RDD-95) completed HALO training with the military in Arizona, commenting that "getting used to free-falling was an experience."

David Scott "Jed" Smith (RDD-02) welcomed a baby boy on Halloween. Preston Jediah Smith, tipping the scales at 6 lb 5oz., has a bright future as a lumberjack.

In other accomplishments, **Jesse Sabino Gonzales III** (RDD-02) was engaged in November and unfortunately won't be returning to jump this year. **Jesse** landed a good job in Santa Rosa and wants to plant some fruit-bearing trees on his property in Costa Rica.

Some of the bros living in Tahoe this year said that snow levels were record with no fences (because they were buried). Getting around posed some challenges, but the skiing was deemed "exceptional."

Someone saw **Steve Murphy** (RDD-88) pulling wheelies out at Shasta OHV park on his 05 Kawasaki 350.

Felipe Marquez (RDD-03) took a job back on Laguna IHC. **Kevin Maier** (RDD-02) is taking a hard look into

cruising the everglades with the fish and wildlife burn module in his home state of Florida.

The air unit is replacing the Beechcraft Barons with two Commanders - one for the south zone and one here at Redding. Rhoades Aviation will supply us with the DC-3 in June, in addition to our Sherpa.

One of our Sherpa pilots, John Blumm, began his second tour of duty in Iraq, piloting Cobra helicopters with the Marine Corps. God speed to John and a safe return.

Boise Base Report

by Grant Beebe (NIFC-90)

Things are typically quiet here in Boise as of press time (mid January). The hiring crew is back with us after the holidays, working to fill a half dozen or so vacancies. We have some 150 applications, so the chore of deciding who will fill those slots is a major one, but about the most important thing that happens at the base.

Most of our openings were created by jumpers who left last spring and summer. The newest slots were created by the departure of **Jake Brollier** (RDD-95) and **Dave Vining** (BOI-97). Jake is working with his father **Phil** (Boise-71) in the family insurance business. Dave accepted a job as AFMO on the Payette N.F. in Council, Idaho. Not much other movement has occurred this winter, a surprising turn of events considering the number of jumpers employed here.

We have two contracts on the street for jumpships, and are anxious to see who the bidders are. There's a possibility we may sign on a Dornier this season, which would give us a faster ship to complement our normal fleet of Twin Otters. This would be a bonus in the Great Basin, where distances to fires can be great.

Work with the Forest Service on a possible new, joint parachute system continues, though not at the pace any of us originally imagined. Prototype systems are scheduled to be delivered sometime late this spring, and the most promising could be jumped experimentally as early as late summer. In the meantime, we'll continue to use mixed loads the way we have, jumpers from each agency jumping their own gear.

We are continuing to look at ways we can improve delivery of our jumpers in the BLM. We're looking both at our parachutes, to see if we're overlooking a better model that might be out there or a better deployment system, and at the way personal gear and cargo are delivered.

By publication, we'll have finished the second of our three refreshers, with most of our 84 jumpers on the rolls, and rookie training underway. Early indications are for a "normal" fire season in the Basin. High precipitation in Nevada and the Southwest promise bumper crops of grass, however, which is a key ingredient for big seasons in the Basin, something we've been spared the past few years. Idaho is dry again. Of course, fire seasons depend on summer weather, and no one's figured out yet how to predict lightning. 🌩

Today Is A Good Day

by Mike Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

I lean over and glance out the window of the Twin Otter. Tanzania is passing below, in a mixture of green hilltops and valleys, and I'm happy to see it doing so. We had taken off from the big international airport of Dar es Salaam hours ago and I'm glad to be leaving Tanzania's very money-oriented culture and its pushy government officials looking for quick money. I'm sick of them all...

Across the horizon is an impressive body of water known as Lake Victoria. I see it and smile. I indeed have made a good decision with this sudden change of my travel plans. I had made this decision only a few days ago back in Zanzibar while sitting on a seawall staring out over the deep blue waters. At the time I was thinking of my narrow escape from a Tanzanian prison when I had to pay my way out of false charges laid against me by a local. Having been the target of so much corruption, including that blackmail, has taught me plenty of good old facts about life. The good don't usually win and the bad really often come out on top, and they often stay there.

Ever since sitting on that seawall in Stone Town, I've been feeling the need to have a big shakeup on this journey across Africa and the Middle East. I feel the need to be the witness of more of Africa's true identity off the tourist tracks. I need to experience some real danger, I need some raw excitement, but not that like I have been finding from the masses of criminals whom I've been seeing around East Africa. I feel as if I need another war to explore, some real wildness, and to learn first hand the truth about a devastating and terrible genocide. I assure myself that this is a good decision, and another of those that will forever keep me different from being just a normal tourist. I have long craved the chaos and excitement that dangerous environments can bring after so many summers of being on the frontlines of America's Western fires.

Where am I headed in this small aircraft? Rwanda and the unknown! The current tourist information that I've read in my guidebook on traveling across Africa suggests there is a good chance that this could be a one-way trip for me. A good old classic adventure from which I may have a limited chance to return alive. I reach over into my lap again and retrieve my thick travel guidebook, I begin to flip through its pages and find its small section on Rwanda's history.

I had been planning to just keep exploring around Tanzania's many remote National Parks on my northward journey through Africa, but with my recent decision, I've changed all of that. "No regrets," I silently nod to myself, thinking of a good English friend of mine who had always said that.

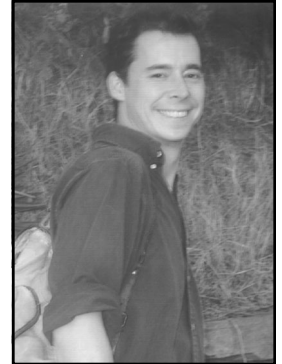
I'm no stranger to setting off on possible one-way journeys such as this, and I proudly begin to review some of them to build my confidence for the challenge ahead of me. My heading off to my first war back in 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico, or embarking on my many past visits in the 1990s to drug traf-

ficking operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. My travels into the unknown of the Mosquito Coast as well, and those into the remote dangerous highlands of Papua, New Guinea, to meet with the warrior clans who still live there, the cannibal peoples of Vanuatu I once spent time with, or the former headhunters of the Philippines and Indonesia. My tours alone into Colombia and Venezuela or any of the numbers of military conflicts I have visited personally over the years remind me of why I'm here. Each of those journeys were undertaken with the knowledge that my own chances of survival could be very limited, and now flying on my way into the heart of Rwanda, I feel no different. My will to survive has always been a large part of my decision in all of these locations, and at this point in my life, I am still embracing the adrenaline rush I feel with that knowledge.

I peer out from the window and watch as big clouds are now forming mushroom shapes up above Lake Victoria. Those clouds, with their ever-growing sizes and changing colors, are truly beautiful and impressive. I had watched many other beautiful clouds with these same thoughts, on many other Twin Otter flights, dressed in my bulky, smokejumper Kevlar jumpsuit, parachutes, helmet and belly pack. I trained to be a smokejumper back in 1995. In my first season I had 15 jumps, then took the next summer off, spending it voluntarily as a helicopter rappeller. The following summer when I had returned to the jumpers, some of the skills I had learned had been pushed far back into my memory as I had not had the chance to practice since my first season.

It had actually taken me up until finally reaching my fifty jumps in 1998 before I had truly understood how to fly a blue and white smokejumper parachute. Before understanding this I had made fifty jumps, and each of those times, as the Twin Otter would be rising up skyward, I would calmly look out into the Montana sky and make friends with the clouds. In the process, I had always felt completely at peace with myself. For on each of those fifty flights, I had watched the beauty of those clouds and always decided that if it was my destiny to die that day, then surrounded by such beauty, it would have been a good day to do so.

Again today I look out from this Twin Otter at these clouds above Lake Victoria drifting slowly off towards Rwanda, and I nod again. "Today will be no different. If it is my destiny, then in such beauty I'm ready!"



Mike Hill (NSA file)

Opening my guidebook and reading the section on Rwanda, I begin to prepare myself for whatever may await. By traveling into Rwanda like this, alone, I understand clearly that if it should be my destiny to die soon, I will proudly go out like a man. I feel that overall I have had a good life. I have ac-

complished the things that I set out to do, and now surrounded by the beauty of Africa, I can think of no better place for it to end. So, today it shall be as good a day as any to die, for I am at peace. 🙏

The old Wyoming saying “**Powder River! Let ’er Buck**” is a story in and of itself. In this poem I refer to those “**Double Diamond**” cowboys. That’s for the old Double Diamond ranch out east of Dubois.

I learned from pioneer stockman and friend, Jared Nettet the importance of putting down the everyday and the not so everyday events of life in cowboy prose. In particular, cowboy poetry is not affected by the politically correct and the latest “verbology” - except to poke fun at it. Cowboy poems get at the truth with humor and rhyme.
—Karl Brauneis (Missoula ’77)

A Tribute to Our Pioneers – “Let ’er Buck”

I won’t forget when Tom turned 90; hear the frontier lore
All those “*Double Diamond*” cowboys shuffled through the door
To wish their partner Tom the best and eat a piece of cake
Told stories of the upper Wind as if it were today
Of punching cows and playing hard on the East Fork of the Wind
They were a breed God set apart, may their story never end

I clearly see my old friend Tom when he was young and strong
Swing off that old Cayuse he rode; bring Winchester to play
And get the drop on a herd of elk to stave the gaunt away
Those great Imperial Japanese; they didn’t stand a chance
When western cowboys all showed up to finish off the dance

Or spend the night with Ivan Metzler at the ranch east of Kinnear
And dine on buffalo just shot with granddads big bore gear
That Sharps been knocking down the meat since 1873
A 45/120/500 -14 lbs loaded that she be

To hear about his cowboy days; hold antiquities of past
Back in the early 19 teens on the old Yellowstone Cattle Ranch
Or how he tracked those horse thieves to their hide out get away
Ivan brought the stock each back to ranch; that’s all there is to say

I just returned from the Fort named Collins – “*now there’s a town that’s grown*”
Carried a briefcase down the street to my class on timber harvest
Walked there among pedestrians to wait on cars to pass
“*Must stay between the painted stripes and hold for lights to flash*”
I guess there’s folks who think it’s swell for many call it home
For me - I’d opt for open range where a man is free to roam

But soon I’m back here on “*The Winds*” and near the mountain top
Bear baits to check up Beaver Creek, with ’94 in hand
And stand upon a trail the “*Wild Bunch*” rode to get away
With posse then in hot pursuit; but losing anyway
Bend down and take a knee right there and gaze up to the peaks
And thank my Holy Father for this land – “*Forefathers’ Birth*”
Just like the border signs attest; “*Wyoming – Like No Other Place on Earth*”

Dedicated to Tom Connell and Ivan Metzler – and all those Cowboys from the past.

Karl is a member of the “Cowboy Poets of Wind River” Incorporated and can be reached at brauneisfam@wyoming.com

Jim Allen - Give Credit Where Credit is Due

by Norm Pawlowski (Cave Junction '57)

In the July 2004 issue of *Smokejumper*, Gary Welch (CJ-60) authored a Life Member profile of James C. Allen (NCSB-46), the Project Air Officer at Cave Junction from 1953-65. I enjoyed the article. "Yep, those are the facts." But something was missing. Many readers would not know that Jim Allen was one of the greatest people any of us have ever worked for. A year prior to a Cave Junction reunion in 2002, while Gary and I were discussing a gift, I suggested that presenting Jim with a gift might embarrass him. It was mutually acknowledged that emotional speeches and praise could embarrass both the recipient and spokesperson. Indeed, it is with this reservation that I approach this writing about Jim.

Gary also stated that Jim Allen was one of the most influential persons in his life. Many other CJ jumpers have made similar statements. We believe this because he changed the lives of so many young men. A person may have influence through teaching, guidance, or handling of a pivotal event. All these apply to Jim, but his greatest influence was as a role model.

History is usually described as facts, dates, places and events. I want to describe Jim through the eyes of an observer, as his life is more than just facts. This observer showed up at the CJ base in June 1957. I was almost 19 and three days out of high school, where I was scholastically at the bottom of my class. My only life experiences were logging and herding cattle on open-range in the mountains east of Cave Junction. Outside the home, the people I had worked with were loggers, farmers, and migrant workers. For many of these people, literally one-half of their spoken language was profanity. The summer before arriving at CJ, I worked for a gypo-logger. During that summer, the logger presented everyone on that crew with at least one near-death experience. Until I arrived at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base (the Gobi), I was destined to become a logger.

At the new jumper orientation, trainer Jack Harter (CJ-51) said, "Jim Allen is the fairest and nicest guy you will ever meet. We do a good job out of respect and consideration for Jim." Repeatedly throughout training, every experienced man on the base repeated and reinforced Jack's endorsement. Why did Jim command so much more respect than anyone else I have every met? After almost 50 years, I still cannot describe what it is that makes Jim special. I can only draw a picture by recounting some memories.

Camaraderie on the Gobi was always high. In 1957, two rookie crews trained at the Cave Junction base. At the end of June, the crew was split and half moved to the new base at Redding, California. The training class was so large that both crew houses were full and there were people sleeping on the lawns. I can't remember exactly why, whether it was the result of losing a contest or bet, but at the end of the day, there were big brawls. We would grab certain jumpers and throw them

into a ditch that supplied water to a neighboring sawmill. The knee-deep ditch ran through the base, next to one of the crew houses. Before this was over, almost everyone had been thrown in, including the squadleaders. The strain from laughter was greater than the strain of the struggle. After about two weeks, one of the squadleaders mentioned that Jim frowned upon this practice. We were really surprised because Jim was jovial and had a sense of humor equal to anyone. Jim did not think we should be grabbing squadleaders and throwing them into the water, and it was getting to the point where some guys were limping the next day. If Jim was displeased, we were not going to do it. It just stopped happening.

The C.J. base was called The Gobi because the desert-like base is located on a dry, ancient lake bed, and the ground is covered with big, round rocks, reminiscent of dinosaur eggs. Brawling on round, rocky ground and throwing guys through the air into a narrow, shallow ditch, plowed out of rock, was probably not too smart. No one said we had to be smart to be smokejumpers

Arising before dawn was no stranger during my tenure at the Gobi. To this day, one of my most vivid memories is the soft, gentle way I could hear Jim moving through the crew house before dawn, awakening certain jumpers. He was so damn polite about it. It gave us a good feeling. Maybe it was a good feeling because having Jim there made us feel important, or maybe his presence instilled a feeling of confidence. At each bunk, Jim would pause giving the individual a few moments to come to life. If alertness waned, he would follow up with, "Do you want to get up now?" The one time that I needed a second notification from Gentleman Jim, I was embarrassed. I never let it happen again. Any day we were awakened before dawn was a good day. If anyone else did the pre-dawn awakening, there was grumbling and rowdiness.

In the 1950s, much of the adult population in the country was WWII or Korean War veterans. The country was a different culture than we have today. Strong leaders who stepped forward and took control were admired, and they had lots of authority with few restrictions. We relied on their judgment and we trusted them. Jim was one of those strong leaders. He knew the details of the administrative job, and he saw that everything was done, and done right. He made sure those under him knew their jobs. Jim's instructions to the cooks were to prepare only good, quality food, and "let them have as much as they want."

We all knew that we were on a well-run base. Camaraderie and high morale was at a level that can only exist in a well-run organization with respect for the top man.

Prior to Jim's arrival at Cave Junction, according to some, supervisors would call the base during periods of high fire activity and find no one in charge because the base foreman was



NCSB Early 50s. L-R: Elmer Neufeld, Francis Lufkin, Howard Betty, Wally Tower and Jim Allen (NSA file)

out jumping fires. When Jim was hired from NCSB in 1953, his hiring supervisors made him promise not to jump fires. There was no agreement on practice jumps and Jim regularly took refresher jumps each year with the returning crew. Jim kept his jump-gear hanging with the crew's, but he never jumped a fire out of Cave Junction. Occasionally after dark, he would show up at fires near the base. Late one September on a slash burning project, Jim was my partner for an all-night patrol. The terrain in the Siskiyou forest is very steep, and it was just the two of us patrolling several hundred acres, knocking down hot spots on near vertical ground. I cannot imagine a better partner on a fire than Jim.

Occasionally a jumper needed a reprimand. Jim never raised his voice, or became emotional or excited. One individual, when describing a mild disapproval he had received, said, "I could have sat on the edge of a newspaper and dangled my feet." Over all, because of the good spirit and good management of the base, reprimands were few. A word from Jim was a favor to the recipient.

No story of Jim Allen is complete without mention of his wife, Emily. Their house was about 200 yards from the center of the base and could be seen from the training area through scraggly pines. Emily was a polished jewel sitting amongst a

bunch of Gobi rocks. Out of that house, there were three of the nicest, cutest, well-mannered, little girls running around the Gobi. (Peggy, daughter #4, was born in Redmond).

Occasionally all three would appear at the office and usher Jim away with a formal escort. It was clear that Emily was in charge of the home.

James C. Allen is the greatest man I have ever met. Many would have us believe that greatness is drawing attention to one's self, or being flamboyant. Flamboyant, Jim was not. He was great for dealing fairly with people, always being polite, knowing what is important and cutting people lots of slack, yet maintaining high standards. He was a role model for many young men. That first summer on The Gobi turned my life around. Jumper training was the first time I had been able to pay attention to any form of formal instruction. That fall, to the surprise of my parents and everyone else, I enrolled in college. I persevered with college until I had a Ph.D. in chemistry.

Assessing the five most influential people in my life, I can confidently say that I met three my first summer at the CJ. The top spot is a toss-up between Jim Allen and my father. When dealing with people or facing critical decisions in my life, Jim Allen was my role model. He is my role model for life. 🙏

“Get Everyone Out of the Aircraft”

by Rodger Vorce (Fairbanks '82), Base Manager 1986-93

It was 1984 and we were flying a Volpar to a state fire just north of the Tanacross, Alaska, airport. I was the spotter and Dennis Bergin was the jumpship captain. Ahead of us were a Catalina air tanker and a T-26, the state lead aircraft. There were eight jumpers on the load and all were jumping rounds, as some weeks before James “Andy” Anderson (MYC-74) had a malfunction on the Ram-Air system, and we were still in the process of sorting that out before continuing with the program. We had departed Fairbanks in clear weather, but around Delta Junction we passed through some hail. Coming out of it, I had glanced out my cockpit window and noticed that the protective Lexan lens cover for the landing light located on the leading edge of the wing had shattered. I told Dennis. He took note and said he’d have the mechanics replace it when we returned after the mission. We flew on. It was a very stable flight in calm weather the rest of the way to the fire. While the lead was working the tanker, we stood off waiting for our turn to take action.

That came soon enough and we moved over the fire. The ground below was an abstract mosaic of features with the vegetation and the many small lakes forming a confusing pattern that made it difficult for Dennis and me to agree on the likely jump spot. He took us lower, and I talked him through the pattern so we could come up on final and get the jump spot defined before getting altitude and commencing the streamer run. It was as Dennis reduced airspeed that the trouble began. He felt it first and came over my headset in a voice filled with urgency, “We have an onboard emergency, aileron flutter. Get everyone out of the aircraft.” I had several thoughts, but the big one was that we were going to crash and I was going to die, and for a moment, I could hardly breathe. We were approaching rising terrain at a low altitude, and the jumpers would not be able to safely deploy, so I unlatched my seat belt to make for the rear of the plane. Then I realized that we would clear the ridge and have sufficient altitude. Re-clamping the seat belt, I keyed the intercom and told them over the external speaker that we had an onboard emergency, that they were to hook up and “bailout.”

Mike Silva (RDD-72) was the first jumper and immediately opened the door. When I turned around and looked, Mike was bent over trying to get the step in place. I keyed the microphone again and said for everyone to get out of the plane – now! Immediately they began exiting and in a few seconds, all were gone. Now for the first time I could feel that the aircraft was not flying well. Aileron flutter is a dynamic problem. Apparently once it begins, it continues to worsen until forces tear it apart and the result is loss of control. What had begun as a subtle feeling had now worsened when the eight deployment bags trailing out of the door had gotten under the elevator on the rear stabilizer. Not only did we have aileron flutter, but now we were experiencing elevator flutter, too.

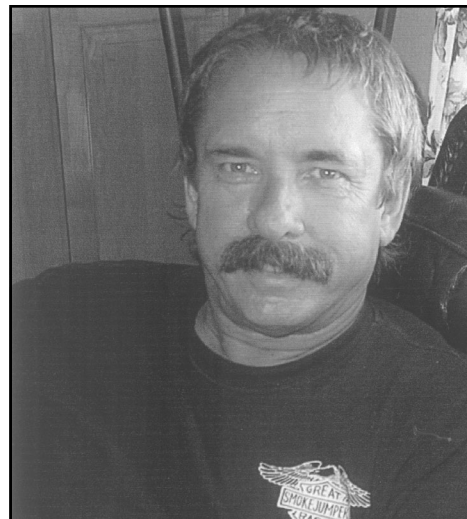
Imagine what it must feel like to drive at high speed down a

railroad track. The Volpar instrument panel is mounted on springs, and as I unbuckled once again, I glanced at the instruments. The vibration was such that they were unreadable.

The vibration was causing dust to be lifted from the fabric and as a result, it was hazy in the main cabin. Dennis said for me to get out of there. But he wasn't getting out of there and that didn't sit too well. I went aft and stopped briefly at the open door and made my first attempt to pull in the trailing d-bags. The static lines had woven themselves together in a bundle five or six inches in diameter, and I wasn't able to get my hands around it for a decent grip. After pulling the lines back a few inches and having them snatched out of my hands by the turbulence, I gave up, let go and turned my attention to getting the spotter chute hooked to my harness.

Once I had clipped on the top clips, I again turned my attention to the d-bags. I took the k-bar knife from its sheath, attached to the bulkhead, and began to cut through the lines. Looking out the door, I could see that once cut, the lines would go over the top of the stabilizer, and the resultant mess would have surely brought us down. Throwing the knife to the floor, I slowly pulled the lines in hand over hand. Occasionally the force against this effort would be sufficient for me to lose ground and be physically pulled toward the door. Finally, feet braced against the internal platform, laid almost flat on my back with static lines draped over my chest, I managed to pull the lump of eight bags into the aircraft. The effect on the performance of the aircraft was immediate and the hum and vibration went away. I cleared away the mess, got up, grabbed the mike and swung my feet into the door.

I asked Dennis if we were going to make it. He replied he had no choice. I asked him again and there was a pause before he replied that he thought we would. I took that in as I continued to sit in the door. Off our nine o'clock parallel to our flight path were the lead plane and the Catalina, and something about that was reassuring. Dennis had apparently been in contact keeping them apprised of our situation. I was asked several times later if I stayed



Rodger Vorce (NSA file)



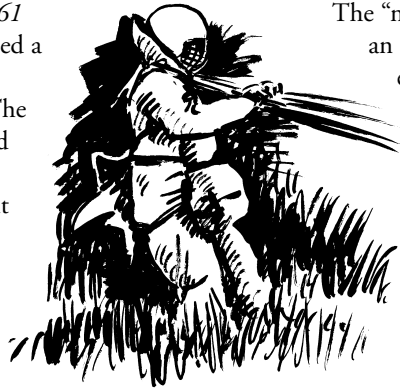
Blast from the Past



Letters To The Editor "The Oregonian" 1961

Your Sunday article on the South Pole caused a flood of memories. A picture shows a striped barber's pole fluttering the Stars and Stripes. The flood began because I was the one who secured the bamboo pole, painted it, made and fitted the sphere-retaining collar to it and delivered it to the C-124 that would drop it at the South Pole.

The idea was conceived as Dr. Paul Siple was preparing to depart for his year's tour at the South Pole station. Dr. Siple was the scientific leader of the first group to overwinter at the station. We knew our flag would be erected at the base and felt it should fly from something more colorful than an iron pipe. Color is to the Antarctica what flowers are to the desert. I assembled the flagpole inside the McMurdo garage and then all the station personnel signed their names.



The "mirror-like sphere" on top of the pole deserves an explanation. Visualize a vast Sahara-like expanse with no landmarks; the entire terrain is one vast sea of deadly monotony. Your radar is almost useless; the ordinary compass goes crazy as you approach the pole. To help the intrepid men flying these missions find the pole oasis, the reflection from the sphere on top of the flagpole in the blinding polar sunshine was visible to planes almost one hundred miles out.

The American venture into Antarctica was a joint venture by the U.S. Navy and the U.S. National Committee of civilian scientists of which I was a member. My assignments were to help initiate surface weather programs, prepare scientific gear destined for the South Pole for parachute dropping and maintain liaison with the Navy.

Howard O. Wessbecger (Missoula '48) 🐼

"Out of the Aircraft" *continued from page 47*

with the aircraft because I was leery of jumping the spotter chute. The truth is that I was always more comfortable in an aircraft when I was chuted up and near the door. I was never a very comfortable passenger in any aircraft. Had I felt as though we were not going to be able to land safely, I'd have left in a heartbeat.

As we approached Tanacross airport, I closed the door, but remained in the back. Dennis, having correctly surmised that reduced airspeed had set up the condition in the first place, told me he was going to land hot. I don't remember what speed we were doing, but it was definitely high. He taxied to the abandoned facility and began shutting the aircraft down. I dropped the stairs and got the hell out. I paced about for a few seconds, then sat down, then got up and paced - adrenaline coursing through. Dennis came down the stairs, walked a few steps and threw up.

Somebody from the state showed up. I left Dennis with the aircraft and called Fairbanks and let them know what had occurred. A helicopter picked up the load that was strung out across the tundra, all of them safe and uninjured.

When I returned to the airport the crew was there. I asked why they appeared to be taking their time getting out the door. Paul Sulinski (NCSB-59) remarked that he hadn't felt any urgency in my voice when I first came across the intercom. My recollection was that I was screaming into the mike - must not have been the case.

Reflecting on this event over the years, I think that when situations turn bad and your life and the lives of others are threatened - your response has already been set up by how you have visualized yourself reacting to it and by the quality of your train-

ing. I know my first reaction was self-preservation. I am forever thankful that something else took over and I became too busy for that to matter.

Arriving in Fairbanks, I wrote up the spotter report and took the rest of the day off. But we were in a bust, and the next day I was back and spotting. The Volpar had returned from Tanacross, repaired and checked out by the Office of Aircraft Services. Dennis and I are paired up again, same ship. A fire call came in and we scurry to the plane, followed by the load, and then take-off. This was the days of the under-six-minute getaways and everything comes fast and furious. Once we were airborne, dispatch gave us the information to the reported fire. We were probably forty miles out of Fairbanks when I turned to Dennis and remarked that I really hadn't been doing anything but listening and feeling the way the jumpship was flying. He grinned and said, "Likewise". After that we settled down to the routine and went about doing what we did - so what? Man, I loved that job.

I suppose that if a similar event happened today, the program would be shut down, the incident studied and analyzed by "concerned" managers, and a thick report issued with all manner of recommendations to change and improve everything from the lens cover to the flight operations.

Paul Sulinski is gone - killed in an automobile accident. I lost track of Dennis Bergin after he moved to Nome. I heard he was flying for someone out there and had bought a boat. He took off in that boat one day and was never heard from again. I believe Mike Silva is still working fire in Alaska. Andy Anderson, I'll bet Andy is fishing. 🐼