

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

I REPORTED IN 2008 that Nicholas Evans, author of “The Smokejumper,” was critically ill after misidentifying and eating *Cortinarius speciosissimus*, a species of mushrooms that are deadly poisonous. Evans remains on dialysis while awaiting a kidney transplant. While his writing has slowed, he is doing well, considering what he has been through.

U.S. District Court Judge Donald Molloy in Missoula ruled on the 2008 retardant lawsuit filed by the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics. The Forest Service is required to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (costing hundreds of thousands of dollars) by the end of the year.

Molloy’s order does not prohibit the use of retardant in the interim. Current guidelines prohibit the dropping of retardant within 300 feet of waterways unless people, property, infrastructure or critical natural resources are threatened. That seems pretty reasonable to me!

Fires. We can only speculate where this all might lead. Will incident commanders be required to consider the environmental consequences of air operations? Imagine losing an entire watershed to protect a few fish.

The Midwest has become home to another Ford Trimotor project. EAA Chapter 1247 formed the Trimotor Heritage Foundation to fund the building/rebuilding of N9684. It is difficult for an EAA Chapter to “own” an airplane, so its members created a foundation. The foundation was also formed so that donations to fund the project are tax-deductible.

You can read about the project at www.trimotorheritagefoundation.org or www.tingoose.org. They are rebuilding the N9684 from the ground up. Original parts that they have are engine mounts, control surfaces, landing gear and some stray fuselage pieces.

N9684 was previously numbered N69905 when Johnson Flying Service and Island Airlines owned it. N9684 was the number it had when it rolled off the assembly line & flew off to Mexico,

then Cuba. In a previous column I mentioned the restoration of Johnson Flying Service Trimotor N8419 which was returned to flying condition last year in Michigan.

If you attended the Redding reunion last year and went on the base tour, you probably saw the vegetable garden. A small experimental garden was planted in 2009 to see if anything would grow on that particular spot. The experiment was so successful that in 2010 the garden was expanded to a quarter-acre.

The idea for the garden came out of the People’s Garden Initiative—a 2009 challenge from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to employees to create community gardens. The initiative doesn’t provide federal money for community gardens.

According to Scott Smith (RDD-02), six trips were made by September to the Good News Rescue Mission in Redding to drop off zucchini, cucumbers, peppers and other fresh vegetables. One side of the garden is tended by smokejumpers. They built several 12-by-25-foot raised

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

beds on the other side for others interested in growing there.

The Redding Hotshots and other employees at the Forest Service Northern California Service Center are also participating in the garden.

If you are interested in the subject of biomass, the John Deere Company has a website dedicated to the subject:

www.woodybiomass.com. John Deere is in the business of selling equipment to harvest biomass, so this site isn't neutral on the subject.

Last year was a difficult year for the NSA. We lost more members than we gained. We lost members in key positions and some of our strongest volunteers were temporarily sidelined due to illness. Several life mem-

bers also passed away.

While the NSA talent pool is very deep, there is always room for another hand. I know everyone is good at something, so please consider giving your time. While you are reading this, please consider extending your membership, investing in a life membership, or giving a membership to your children, grandchildren or a buddy. 🙏

Poor Old George-(An Interview With Bob Nicol)

by Gayle Morrison (Associate)

This is a follow-up story to "Project Coldfeet," by Toby Scott (MYC-57), which ran in the January 2010 issue of "Smokejumper." Bob Nicol (MSO-52) was another crewmember on the Intermountain Aviation B-17 that was used in Project Coldfeet. As part of her oral history research for a book about Jerry Daniels (MSO-58), Gayle Morrison conducted multiple interviews with both Nicol and Scott regarding the B-17's Skyhook aerial pickup system. This firsthand account of a second Skyhook mission is a composite of Morrison's interviews with Bob Nicol.

One of the first projects we got into down at Marana was the Skyhook. I think the B-17 got down there towards the end of '61. Robert Fulton, the Skyhook inventor, was there at Marana almost all the time.

The aerial pickup system required five crewmembers, excluding the two pilots Connie Siegrist and Doug Price. The Skyhook team was the nose position manned by Toby Scott or Kirk Samsel (MSO-60), Jerry Daniels was the winch operator in the old radio compartment, Miles Johnson (MYC-53) was in the Joe hole (belly gunner) position, I was in the tail position, and Jack Wall (MSO-48) was the crew chief. All of us were smokejumpers.

After much trial and error, the first time we used the Skyhook pickup system operationally was in May and June 1962 for Operation Coldfeet when we picked up two military guys we'd dropped on an abandoned Russian research station out on an ice island in

the Arctic Ocean.

We used the Skyhook system again in the summer of '63 when we extracted an American scientist up at the ARLIS Arctic research station. I called him "Poor Old George."

See, in July '63, Jerry and Toby and I and my wife were over at Silver City, N.M. I was flying Jerry and Toby around in an old Cessna 190 so they could ride in rodeos. Those guys paid for the gas for the airplane, and they'd hit one rodeo a weekend. They usually lost their butts, but they had a lot of fun.

My wife and I were sitting in the grandstand waiting for Toby and Jerry to get on their bulls or whatever they were riding that day. On the loudspeaker the announcer says, "Bob Nicol, please report to the announcer's booth."

I thought, "What the hell? Who knows I'm out here?" So, anyway, I went up there and they said, "You got a call from Marana. You're supposed to call them back right away."

I did, and that call was the alert to go up and get this sick scientist. He's one of eight or nine people livin' in Quonset huts out on the Arctic ice pack.

We rounded up Toby and Jerry, and we beat feet back to Marana. The next day we launched the B-17 and went right straight through to Fairbanks.

The scientists on the ice island were talking on the radio all the time. The one guy was sick and Skyhook was the only way they could get him out because the runway on the ice island was closed.

When the sick scientist heard the Skyhook plan, he said, "You're gonna get me out of here, how?!? No way am I leaving like that!" So we went back to Marana.

We got back to Marana and about a week later I read in the paper that a scientist at the North Pole died. Well, so sad, too bad; he missed his chance. When I read that, little did I realize that we were going back up there again. See, an ice island ain't a really good place for a grave, you know?

So the scientists wrapped Poor Old George in a sleeping bag and a canvas and strung him up on the roof to freeze him and to preserve the body. That was better than just layin' him in the snow where dogs or polar bears could get at him. They figured on bringing him out in another six weeks or so when the ice froze hard enough to land airplanes there again. Then his family found out about that and said, "No, you ain't gonna treat my son that way."

They wanted his body back for burial now. They said, "Get him off the roof and put him in a freezer." Well, the family didn't know what they were asking for. They didn't realize there was only a short deepfreeze. To get him in there, the scientists had to bend him over bare-ass naked.

Then the Navy contracted with Intermountain for us to go back up there and use the B-17 Skyhook to pick up Poor Old George.

Jerry and I and the rest of the Skyhook crew left Marana on Aug. 9. We took along a couple gallons of Oso Negro Mexican gin with us.

A couple days later a DC-4 dropped the whole pickup package to the ARLIS research station, all 850 pounds of equipment with the pickup suit, instructions and everything else. The pickup suit is like a snowsuit with a parachute harness sewn into it.

As it was, Poor Old George was bent frozen, and they couldn't get the suit on him. We were waiting in Barrow, and we said, "Well, you gotta get Old George in the pickup suit. Thaw him out."

They laid him on the kitchen floor and tried to thaw him out so they could straighten him. They radioed and said, "He ain't gonna thaw. Every time we try to get him to full length he starts comin' apart."

We had what we called a pickup drop bottle. Basically it was a canvas bag shaped like a milk bottle, about four feet tall and three feet in diameter. That's what we used to drop the entire pickup package – the balloons, the line, the suit, all that stuff. And we had used it to pick up stuff from the Russian ice island the previous summer when we dropped off (U.S. Air Force Maj. Jim) Smith and (U.S. Air Force Lt. Junior Grade Leonard) LeSchack.

All the documents and equipment that they re-

trieved from NP8 came up in one of those bottle bags. It had good air flow, and we could get it in through the tail, no problem. But it's pretty small. Anyway, we said, "If you can't thaw him out to get him in the suit, can you get him in the pickup bag?"

They said they'd try. Then all of a sudden the word came out that they got Poor Old George in the bottle bag. An hour later we were fixin' to launch.

We got all the way up there and the ground fog over the ice was so bad the weather canceled us out. We went back and waited in Barrow a couple of days because the weather was supposed to get better. It did and we launched again.

By the time we found the research station, the ground fog was rolling in again. It was rollin' in like fog does, comin' in low ground. We were pretty close by then.

The pilot radioed, "Launch the balloon." Over the fog that white balloon was stickin' right up through the clouds. The pilot said, "Stand by for pick up," and boy, we were ready to go within 30 seconds. When we went over the research camp, we never did see anything on the ground.

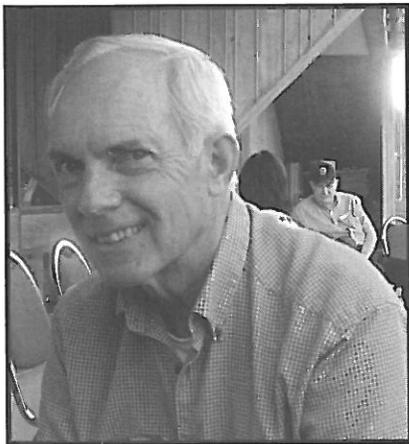
I was in the tail and Old George was just a routine pickup once we got hold of the line. Up came Old George. He was totally in the pickup bag, still frozen in the bent-over position. And as the yoke grabbed the tether line, I threw those two gallons of Oso Negro gin out the tail. We had 'em padded up real well, and we had little parachutes rigged on 'em.

You should have heard those guys on the ground talkin' on the radio. They said, "It's just like God came to us. Here's George sittin' in a bag on the ground and then we hear an airplane overhead, and George slowly lifts straight up and disappears in the fog. At the same time two small parachutes come down through the fog with big jugs of gin on 'em!"

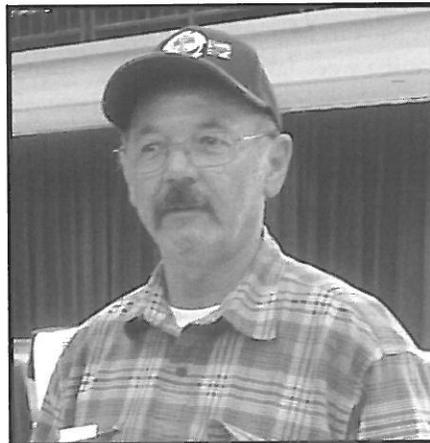
It was a long flight back to Barrow with Poor Old George riding in the tail of that B-17. My log book says the whole trip was 15 hours and 25 minutes.

I don't think the airplane would have held up much longer. We'd gone up there almost to the North Pole less than a month before, came back to Marana, then went again. Those old airplanes need a lot of tender loving care when they get rode hard and put away wet, you know?

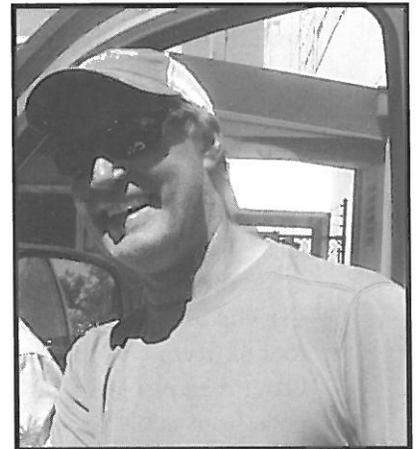
Anyway, it was seven or eight hours back to Barrow, and those scientists on the ice island were talking on the radio that whole flight. As the night went on and we got closer to Barrow, the story about Old George rising up through the clouds and the gin coming down just got better. 🍷



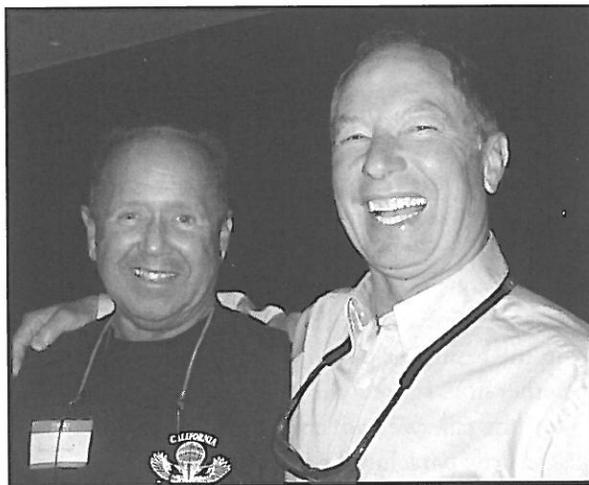
Rob Shaver (MYC-67)



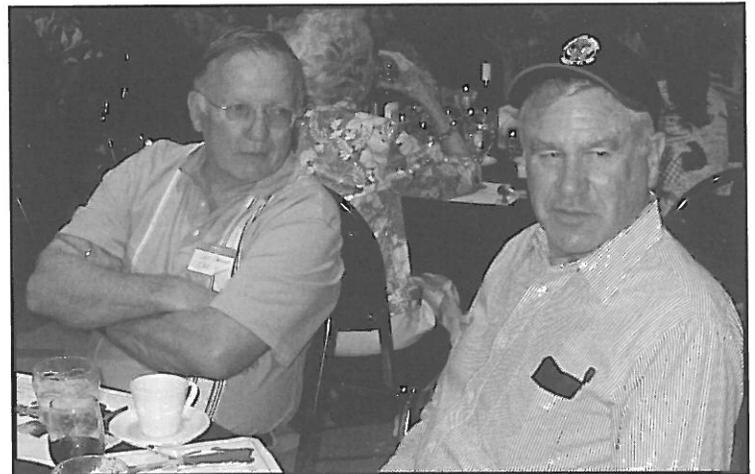
Scott Warner (RDD-69)



John Bald (RDD-78)



Ron Omont (RDD-78) & Doug Houston (RAC-73)

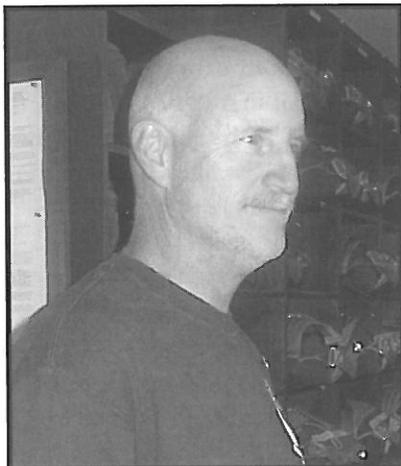


Leo Cromwell (IDC-66) & Jim Lancaster (MYC-62)

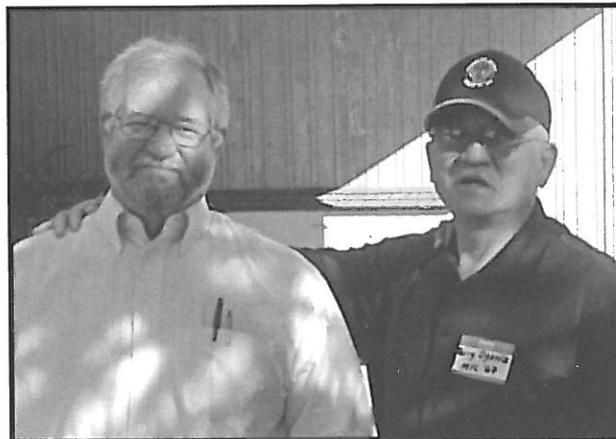


Redding Reunion 2010

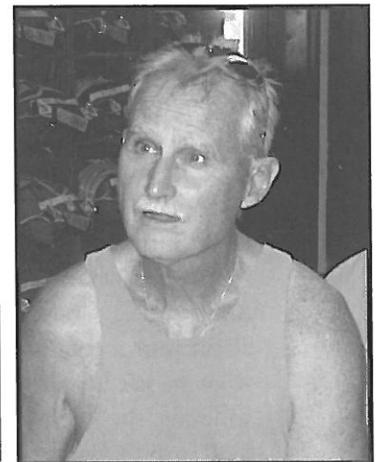
Photo's Courtesy Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)



Don Sand (RDD-79)



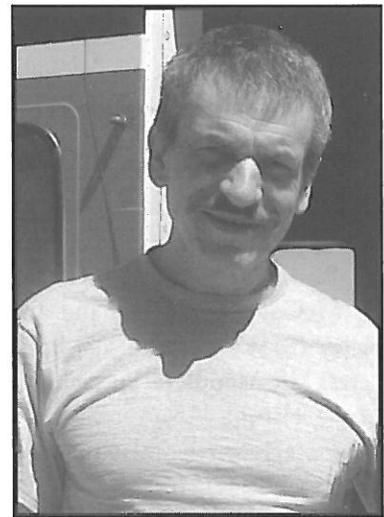
Dan Emry (BOI-78) & Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)



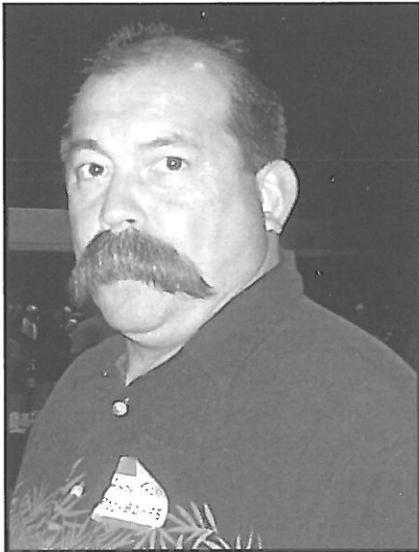
Gary Johnson (RDD-69)



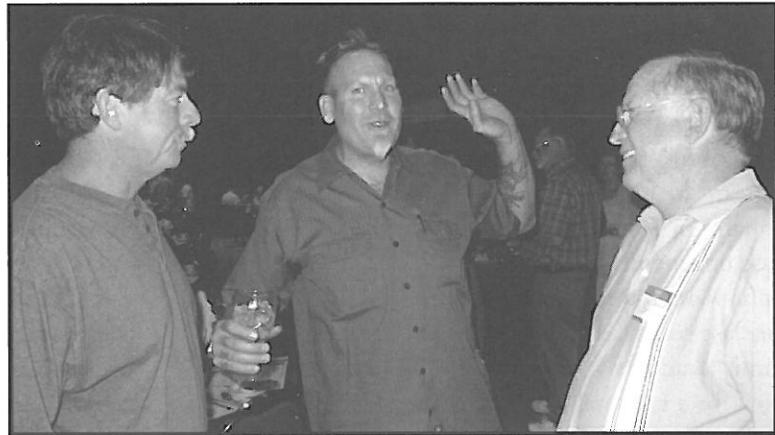
L-R: Java Bradley (MSO-74), Wild Bill Yensen (MYC-53), Don Clarke (MSO-68), Bill Newlun (MYC-70) & Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)



Dennis Golik (MYC-74)



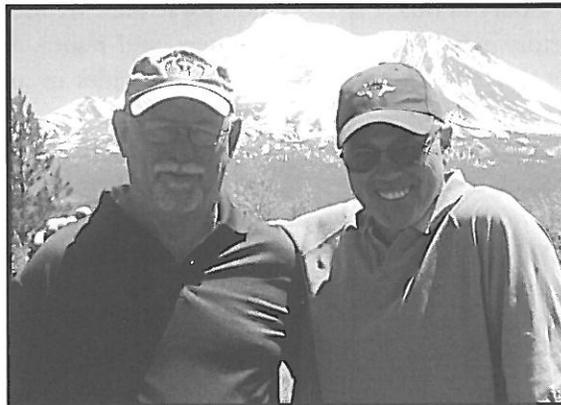
Andy Thorne (RDD-82)



L-R: Gordon Woodhead (RDD-83), Dan Ogden (RDD-92) & Leo Cromwell (IDC-66)



Neil Satterwhite (MYC-65)

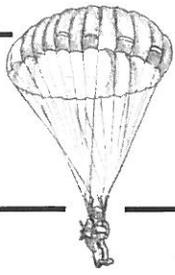


Don Clarke (MSO-68) & Bill Newlun (MYC-70)



Butch Perry (MSO-67)

Layout Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to David Oswalt (CJ-68), Roy Korkalo (MSO-61), Ronald Borst (NCSB-64), Doug McCoy (RDD-73), and Doug Wamsley (MSO-65) who just became our latest Life Members. Special thanks to Jerry DeBruin (Associate) who just purchased a Life Membership for his brother, Gene DeBruin (MSO-59), who is MIA in Laos since September 5, 1963, in the shoot down of an Air America plane.

Just read an interesting article written by Debbie Bryce in the July 29, 2010, issue of the Idaho State Journal. It details the firefighting career of Fort Hall resident *Leo Edmo*, who claims to have 40 years in wildland firefighting. Part of this was as a smokejumper in Alaska where he made 50 jumps. Problem being is that he is not listed in our database and no one has heard of him. We probably need to start a list of "phantom" smokejumpers and go after them to increase our membership.

Another "phantom" smokejumper appeared in the *Fresno Bee* last year. *Todd "Hoss" McNutt*, a teacher at the Summit Academy in Porterville, California, was nominated for a national teaching award. He talked about his time as a smokejumper, but also is not listed in our database.

One of the most satisfying aspects of editing this magazine is contacting jumpers and hearing their stories. *Ross Parry* (MSO-58) has one heck of a story in this issue on the Higgins Ridge Fire. It is a story in which an amazing helicopter pilot, *Rod Snider* (NCSB-51), rescues jumpers from what looks to be certain death. As with many stories in *Smokejumper* magazine, this story developed over a period of a year or so with communication between Ross and myself.

Ross talked with *Ron Stoleson* (MSO-56), who confirmed that the pilot was an ex-jumper. From there I go to the NSA database and find Rod Snider (NCSB-51) and, to my luck, he is an NSA member. A quick phone call to Rod confirms that he was the helicopter pilot who saved a bunch of jumpers on that fire and who received the "North American Forest Fire Medal," which is given for heroism of the highest order.

When we started working on the Siskiyou Smoke-



jumper Base Project in 2009, *Paul Block* (CJ-48) was flying over the airport in his gyrocopter. It was a strange looking machine. It was a helicopter with a propeller in the back that made it a combination helicopter/airplane. It was an amazing machine and Paul's buzzing of the airport kept us continually looking upward. I had a chance to talk to Paul during the 2009 project and was astonished at his enthusiasm for flying. He was 84 years old at that time and said that he lived in Cave Junction so that he could fly whenever he wanted to fly. This year at the 2010 work project, Paul was on hand one day looking over our work. Unfortunately, we did not get to talk to him.

On August 2, 2010, Paul's gyrocopter crashed at the Illinois Valley Airport and he was killed. It appeared to be a mechanical failure. Observers noted that a part of the tail flew off and hit the propeller. He was 85 at the time and had flown for over 60 years. When I received the news of this event and read it, I thought that this was the way Paul would have wanted to go. Eighty-five years old and flying his gyrocopter vs. sitting in a rest home and playing checkers.

Paul's death will go unnoticed by most, but he typifies smokejumpers and the type of persons who do the job. In *Popular Mechanics* magazine way back, Paul was credited with the development of the ascension parachute. We used it in training rookie smokejumpers, and resorts all over the world still charge tourists for rides in an ascension parachute towed behind a boat.

Paul probably had the petal to the metal when his machine crashed.

Bob Webber (MSO-62): "About 200 people from all over the nation attended *Al Dunton's* (FBX-67) memorial service on Saturday, July 31, 2010. It was a hot, dusty and very windy afternoon outside Carson City, NV, on the Silver Saddle Ranch, just the way Al had hoped.

"My wife, Lee (Leona), and I were asked to video and take photos of the day. Any interested in a copy should contact Mary Dunton. I also video'd *Earl Cooley's* (MSO-40) funeral and both sessions of *Jon McBride's* (MSO-54) services. There is no cost for either and anyone interested in a copy should send

NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

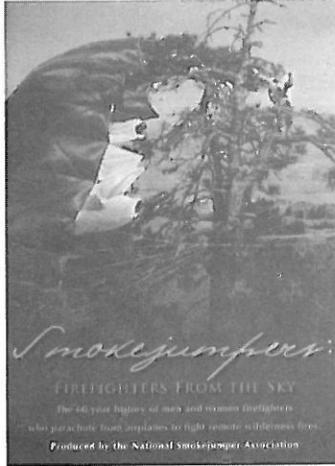
Show your pride with these fine apparel items and souvenirs ... at special prices just in time for the holidays!



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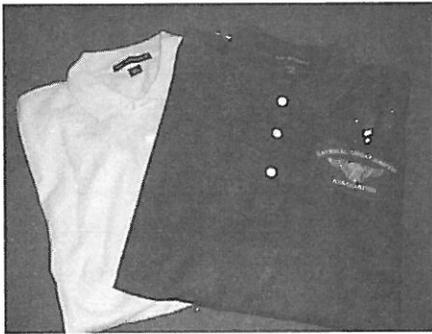
"Smokejumper: Firefighters From the Sky" DVD \$12 (regularly \$15)

This DVD covers the 60-year history of men and women firefighters who parachute from airplanes to fight remote wilderness fires. The National Smokejumper Association is dedicated to preserving the history and lore of Smokejumping. 120 minutes long ... great value for this DVD.



NSA logo twill cap \$12 (regularly \$15)

100 percent cotton, 6-panel with Velcro closure. Choose from black, navy blue, khaki or forest green.



Pima cotton sport shirt \$25 (S-XL), \$27 (XXL)

100 percent Pima cotton with honeycomb pique; double-needle stitching, flat knit collar and cuffs, locker patch, side vents. Traditional 3-button placket. Choose from khaki, navy blue or forest green.



Metro duffel \$23 (regularly \$25)

100 percent polyester, 600 denier fabric with dobby contrast. Perfect for an active lifestyle. Versatile, thanks to organization area in front. Measures 23.25" wide x 12" high x 11.25" deep. Forest green.

NSA Smokey T-shirt \$15

White with Smokey Bear logo **ON BACK**. NSA logo on left breast. **Limited quantities available** ... contact KASMAR Promotions for information.



Knit jersey polo shirt \$15 (S-XL), \$17 (XXL) (regularly \$20 and \$22)

100 percent ring-spun combed cotton; colorfast. Welt collar, 2-button placket. Choose from red, forest green or white.



Bumper sticker \$1.50 Or buy two for \$2.50!

Window decal \$2 Or buy two for \$3!



• More items and order form on other side •



Crewneck sweatshirt
\$21 (regularly \$23)

Made from 60/40 ring-spun combed cotton/polyester. Fully coverseamed, rib-knit collar with V-notch, rib-knit cuffs and waistband, set-in sleeves. Choose from navy blue, gray or black.

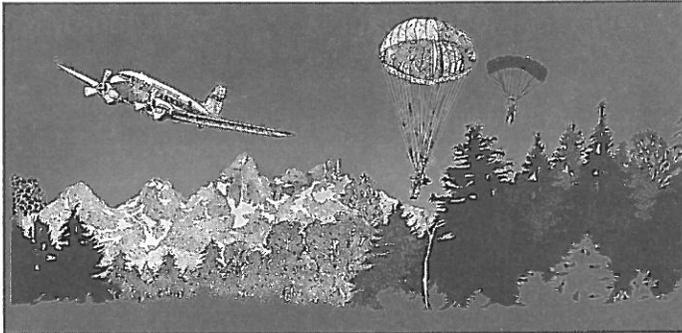


NSA camo hat \$15

Embroidered logo on front. One size. Structured. 60/40 Cotton/Poly. Mid-profile and Velcro closure on back.

Smokejumper T-shirt \$16

Handsome artwork adorns this all-cotton shirt. Choose from powder blue or light blue.



• **Order form** •

Item	What color? (if applicable)	What size? (if applicable)	How many?	Total cost
"Smokejumpers: Firefighters From the Sky" DVD				
Twill cap				
Pima cotton sport shirt				
NSA Smokey T-shirt				
Knit jersey polo shirt				
Metro duffel				
Bumper sticker				
Window decal				
Crewneck sweatshirt				
Smokejumper T-shirt				
NSA camo hat				

Subtotal – add the total cost from the items

Shipping – \$6 for the first item; \$2 for each additional item

GRAND TOTAL

Shipping information ...

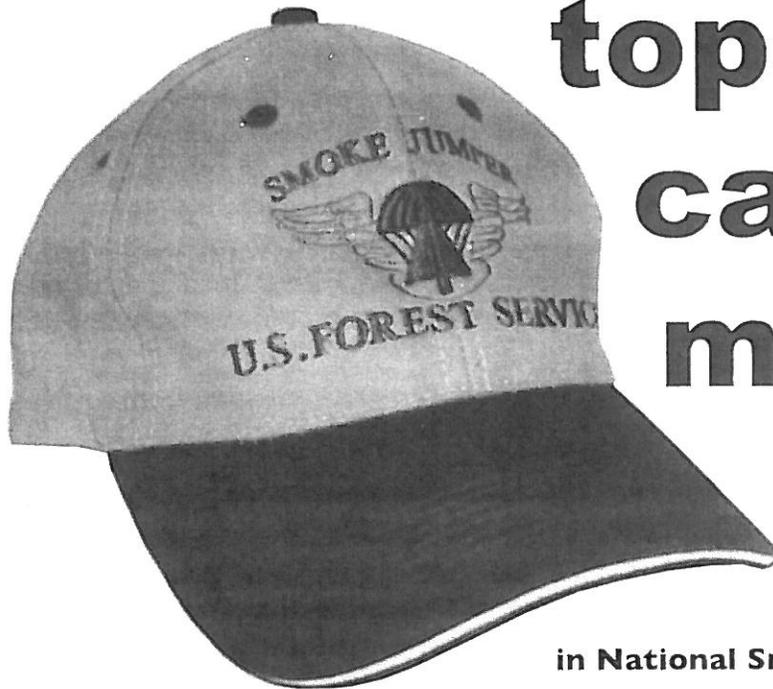
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From its soft, luxurious cotton twill body to its expertly embroidered logo, this National Smokejumper Association cap has all the stylish features you love. You'll show your pride as a smokejumper no matter how you wear it ... whether as a sharp and crisp complement while camping, around town, or while working in the yard. It's a perfect conversation starter whenever anyone asks about smokejumping, and you'll feel even better as all profits from the sale of these hats benefit the NSA!

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Each cap is \$15.95. Your total is: \$ _____

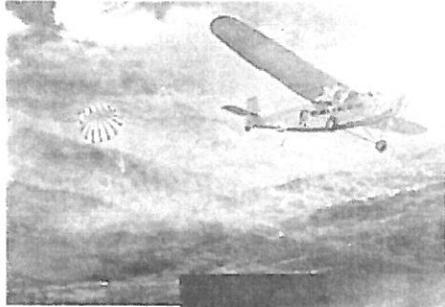
Shipping and handling is \$3.95, regardless of the size of your order. **Buy more and save!**

Your GRAND TOTAL is: \$ _____

Please make your check payable to **NSA**

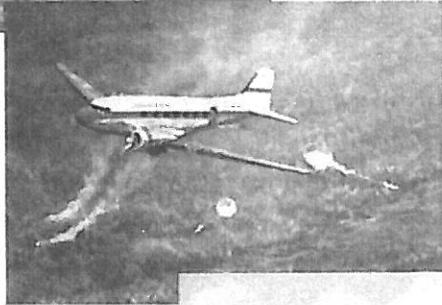
Show your pride this holiday season
with National Smokejumper Association

Christmas Cards



Looking for a unique way to support the National Smokejumper Association as you send your Christmas greetings this year? You've found the perfect card – the NSA Christmas Card series. Masterfully created by artists Bruce Ford and Larry Janoff, these full-color images depict jumping scenes with varying aircraft over the decades. Inside image depicts a pulaski with its blade in a stump.

Three images by Larry Janoff

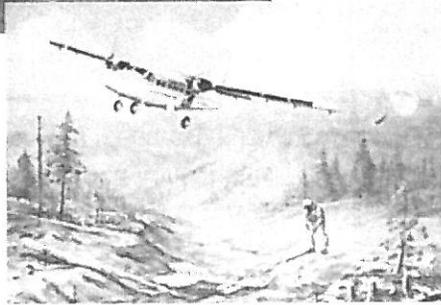


Set 1 – Total of 12 cards ... three each of the four images pictured; pulaski inside. \$18.

Set 2 – Total of 24 cards ... six each of the four images pictured; pulaski inside. \$28.

Set 3 – Total of 16 cards ... four each of the four images pictured; blank inside. \$16.

Set 4 – Total of six cards ... one each of the four images pictured plus two random cards. \$10.



Bruce Ford



Because of the extremely limited press run, and due to their superior quality, these cards will not last. Order today to avoid disappointment ... and remember that profits from the sales of these Christmas cards benefit the National Smokejumper Association!

"Pulaski" image inside of card

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Item	How many?	Each set	Total
Set 1		\$18	
Set 2		\$28	
Set 3		\$16	
Set 4		\$10	
Merchandise total			
Shipping – regardless of order size			\$3.50
Please make checks payable to NSA			
GRAND TOTAL			

an email to us here in Hamilton, MT, (webbr712@aol.com).”

Doug Houston (RAC-73): “Daren Belsby was named the base manager of NCSB. Daren has been in an acting position for the past few months, but now is officially the go-to guy. He also said that an order had just come in for 15 jumpers to go to McKenzie, British Columbia, and they were busy getting their gear together.”

Ramona Atherton (RAC-06) was the subject of an interview on the website Hotshot Fitness (www.hotshotfitness.com). After competing as a triathlete at the University of Nevada, Atherton has maintained her phenomenal condition – which obviously is crucial to being an effective smokejumper.

She was a member of the Logan Hotshot crew in northern Utah after serving on an engine on the Nez Perce N.F. for a season. One of Atherton’s sisters, **Aicha Hull (GAC-03.)**, jumped in Grangeville for three seasons.

Now Atherton is ready to study meteorology as a graduate student at the University of Utah.

Atherton bicycles, runs and swims to remain in top-notch shape, allowing her to compete in “Half-Ironman” races once a year. In offering advice to prospective smokejumpers as they prepare for the rigors of the job, she said: “Do a lot of push-up runs. Run a quarter mile; do 25 push-ups. Find someone who runs faster than you, and make yourself keep up with them because that’s what’s gonna happen to you. And the minimums are really the minimums. And if that’s all you got – then you’re not okay. You might make it – but you’ll be pretty miserable. Definitely prepare for the packout. You might be a great runner, but once you put 110 pounds on your back, it’s a totally different story. You’ll definitely want to try it a few times.”

Several members have forwarded an article on **Sara Brown (RAC-03)** in the University of Wyoming magazine (UWYO). Sara is featured on the cover and in a good seven-page article. Sara was injured on a fire jump in 2007 and, as a result of that injury, had her right foot amputated in 2008. The NSA Good Samaritan Fund has contributed toward Sara’s support in her graduate studies at the U. of Wyoming.

Terry Egan (CJ-65): “I was asked by the Executive Director of the National Emergency Management Association to develop a short, bulleted history of PNEMA (a mutual aid compact among Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, British Columbia and the Yukon). It took a bit of detective work, but I found out that PNEMA was the brainchild of **Hugh**

Fowler (MSO-52) back in the 1980s when he was Director of the Washington State Emergency Management Division. I think it is wonderfully ironic that years later, when the arrangement became more formally organized, another smokejumper from Cave Junction should become the first Chair of PNEMA Executive Task Force and doing work to carry out Hugh Fowler’s vision.

“It is indeed a small world! I had to go to Nice, France, to give a presentation at an international conference and ended up having lunch with **Russ Johnson (RDD-70)**.”

Phantom Alert: Another “phantom” smokejumper hit the news today (August 20, 2010). In a web article by “smokeybombs” about the Backcountry Horseman on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie N.F., trail coordinator **Ron Downing** is described as being “no stranger to the Forest Service, having been a smokejumper, then pack leader.”

Jerry Vice (RDD-69): “On October 16, 2010, at 11:30 A.M., the California Professional Firefighters organization added two Region 5 smokejumper’s names to the memorial wall honoring those who died in the line of duty in 1970:

Tom Regennitter (RDD-67) was killed while jumping the Oak Fire, Shasta Trinity National Forest on June 3, 1970.

Steve Grammer (RDD-70) died in a helicopter crash while detailed to the Redding Hotshots on the Forks Fire, Angeles National Forest on September 28, 1970.

“The ceremony took place at the California Professional Firefighter Memorial Wall in Capital Park, Sacramento, California. For further information and driving instructions, go to www.cpf.org

“When in the site, scroll down to Firefighters Memorial information.”

Parachute Loft Foreman, **Keith Wolferman (MSO-91)**, responded to the mention of the Army adopting the new MC-6 parachute from the October 2010 issue of *Smokejumper*: “There seemed to be some confusion about the canopy being similar to the BLM Ram-Air parachutes. It is in fact identical to the USFS FS-14, 32-ft. large canopy. The use of the Forest Service canopy came about when the Army put in a large amount of time and money to find a replacement to the steerable T-10 for use in the Special Forces community. Larger loads, due to more equipment, were leading to very heavy exit weights and a higher injury rate due to hard landings. They basically reconstructed the T-10 with a very low porosity fabric to reduce descent rates and called it good. After going in to production, they found it was injuring jumpers

at the higher altitude at Ft. Carson (6-10 thousand feet). When trying to decide what course of action to take next, a soldier familiar with our operational capabilities claimed to know of a steerable canopy that could deliver a softer landing as well as tolerable openings at speeds and altitudes found at higher altitudes. The army purchased some FS-14's and test drops proved the canopy was in fact an improvement. Once formally adopted in to the Army's inventory, it was dubbed the MC-6." Thanks, Keith, for setting the record straight.

Jeff Fereday (MYC-70): "Jerry Dixon (MYC-71) died of pneumonia at 1:30 a.m., September 9, in a hospital bed in Seward, Alaska. The pneumonia was a complication of or exacerbated by ALS, the terminal disease with which Jerry was diagnosed in mid-2009.

The news of Jerry's death brought me sadness and relief. I never discussed it with him, but there can be no question that Jerry Dixon did not want to exist, not even for a few months, in a wheelchair or propped up in a bed. He walked into that hospital the afternoon of September 7 under his own power, even though he was down to 129 pounds, had trouble breathing, and had limited use of his hands and arms. ALS was beginning to affect his legs as well, but those legs carried him then just like they had so many thousands of challenging miles before: to the top of Denali, many times across Alaska, through the Rockies, through the Himalaya, through the deserts of the West, through the fatigue during long nights fighting fire on so many mountainsides. I believe Jerry willed himself to this exit, which I'll bet for him was a big windy door in the DC-3 over the Idaho wilderness, with a huge thunderhead on the horizon. Jerry hooked up and stepped out and away.

"Jerry's last eight months demonstrate his approach to life and to death. It was so...well, so purely Jerry. He climbed Kilimanjaro in January. In March he flew with a friend in a Piper Cub from Alaska to Colorado. He visited us in Boise in April. He drove himself to a college reunion in June, and in July floated the Grand Canyon for his fourth and final time on a trip with his two sons and dear friends Ron Watters and Kathy Daly of Pocatello. He drove himself back to Alaska. In August he visited friends in Alaska and kept upright and moving, moving until the end.

"Jerry's sons, Kipp and Pyper, and wife, Deborah, were with him when he left us.

"I'll think of Jerry whenever I'm on the South Fork Salmon River and whenever I see lightnin' on the Payette."

Mike McMillan (FBX-96) and his wife, Molly, welcomed Ian Patrick McMillan to their family September 11, 2010. Mike does a terrific job in putting together the "Touching All Bases" column for the magazine.

Fred Cooper (NCSB-62): "That was a very good Editorial you wrote. Several of us here in Missoula were talking after McBride's death about getting our own houses in order. As I'll explain later, it is even more pertinent for me to get it done.

"I don't know if you heard, but I came very close to making it on your "Off The List" posting. The third week in July, I led a crew of four, hiking in and out 15 miles each way, to replace a cabin roof in the BOB. Due to the weather and terrain, it took over 10 hours each way. The following week I led a crew of 12 in Glacier Park replacing a bridge and a turnpike, hiking about 5 miles each day. The last couple days in the Park, I was not feeling too good, but I drove myself home on the last Friday in July. (I wasn't feeling good after getting out of the BOB either and spent the weekend resting in a motel in Choteau.) I went to the Now Care Clinic. They looked at me for about two minutes and sent me to the ER at St. Pats Hospital here in Missoula. That afternoon they attempted to fix me up with a stent, but my heart was too far-gone, so they scheduled me for open-heart surgery Sunday morning. The lead surgeon had to almost call his team in Saturday night, but they finally got me stabilized. I ended up with a 4-way bypass and surgery to repair my Mitral Valve. I spent the first two and a half weeks of August in the hospital - had some complications that kept me there for an extra week. I'm finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel for getting back to normal, which will be at least another 60 days or so. The Doc said the only reason I made it was because I hadn't smoked, was not overweight, and wasn't an alcoholic. He said I had bad genes, which I was not aware of as my parents are still alive and in the 90s. The major thing I wish is that Jon and Ray (Farinetti) could have made it so we could have shared our own stories.

"The advice I'm giving others in our age class is that if they feel short of breath climbing an uphill trail, don't chalk it up to getting older or being out of shape—it could very well be their heart telling them it needs help!"

Got a good card from **Neil Satterwhite (MYC-65)** who enjoyed the Redding reunion in June. Neil has been in the hospital with some health issues. Wishing him a complete recovery.

At the Reunion, **Hugh Rosenberg (CJ-59)** gave me a picture taken back in 1959 showing me in a sleeping bag, glass taped to the flagpole at the standby shack

in La Grande. Writing on the back says, "Sheley being disciplined for wetting down a bunch of 'napping' smokejumpers with a fire hose." Apparently those guys didn't have a sense of humor.

Harvey Versteeg (MSO-53): "The comment in the Stan Tate article (Oct. issue) mentioned the conversion from flat pack chutes to deployment bag packed chutes in the '60s. After jumping the former from Missoula in '53, I jumped D-bag chutes with the 101st Airborne in '57-58, some years before the Forest Service got around to the changeover. I commented on the difference in opening shock in at least one of the stories I sent you some years back. The flat pack opening was tolerable in a 50-70 MPH exit, but dangerous at 100. In the Army we were exiting planes at 120 MPH or more, using the D-bag packing."

Jedidiah Lusk (FBX-10) likes big trucks and tractors. But at age 9, getting to drive one of those behemoths wasn't a possibility ... until the California Department of Transportation heard about his story.

As you might know, Jedidiah has an inoperable brain tumor. The biopsy surgery alone left the boy partially paralyzed. His parents, **Scott Lusk** (FBX-81) and **Cynthia Nichols Lusk** (RAC-87), added Jedidiah to their family list of smokejumpers, thanks to the NSA's Good Samaritan Fund. The Make-A-Wish Foundation helped transport the family to Fairbanks, where Jedidiah received spotter training and ultimately, his rookie pin with a fine ceremony.

Jedidiah got another thrill Sept. 14 when he had the chance to operate some heavy machinery at a Caltrans construction site in Plumas County, not far from where he lives.

Caltrans engineer Ron Collins set the visit up at the Spanish Creek Bridge Project on Highway 70 after hearing about Jedidiah's illness.

"He's a neighbor and we found out he loved the equipment, so I talked to (construction company) C.C. Myers and they were excited. We called all our safety controllers, and everyone 100 percent agreed and here he was, out here running our equipment," Collins said.

George Bravo with Caltrans says this isn't something they normally do, but this was a special situation and a special little boy.

"This was a pretty unprecedented thing for Caltrans and a construction company to do. There's a lot of safety factors involved," Bravo said.

Caltrans even presented Jedidiah with his own hardhat, vest and shirt. With help from C.C. Myers Superintendent Don Hughes, Jedidiah was able to operate an excavator. The smile on Jedidiah's face as he sat behind the controls made all the effort

worth it.

"I think it was just one more thing he was able to accomplish in his young life. We don't know what the future holds for him," Hughes said.

Jon McBride (MSO-54) was honored posthumously in November by the *American Trails Board* for his leadership with the NSA Trails Program. The award was given at the National Trails Symposium in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Don Hertzog (MYC-48): "We were on a tour bus trip last September and stopped at Glenwood Springs for a swim in the hot springs. As I was putting on my swimsuit, the man next to me looked at my "Idaho Smokejumper" tee shirt and asked if I was a smokejumper. It turned out he was the son of **Terrell Siepert** (MYC-47). I believe he said his dad passed away in 2002 or '03 of cancer. He was on his way out the door so I didn't even get his name, but it was a jolt for me.

"We didn't stop at the Storm King Fire Memorial, as I didn't know where it was. Now I am re-reading John Maclean's book *Fire on the Mountain*. Excellent read."

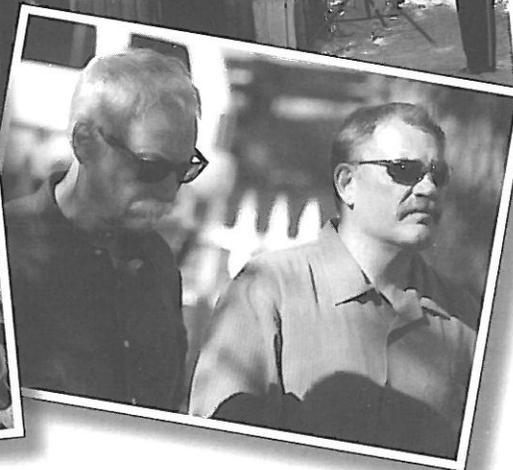
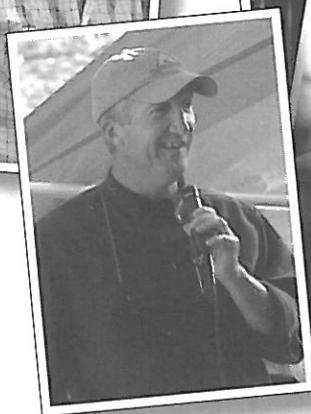
Joe Gutkoski (MSO-50) is mentioned in an article in the October issue of *Field & Stream* magazine, page 58. Joe's method of tracking an Elk over a 3-day period is the subject of the letter.

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "I'm in between antelope, deer and elk seasons. Highlight of the fall was surviving a good bucking horse ride. Took a good horse out to stretch his legs before we moved some cows. About a mile out he decided he was heading home. Went to bucking and I gave him his head and caught his rhythm. Didn't see ears for a good 10 seconds. Got him pulled up after a while and got off to find my hat - boy we covered some ground. Felt like I was 20 years old at the national finals. Next day I felt like a 101 and couldn't walk straight for a week. Damn, it sure gets tough living the dream."

After describing training on the jump towers in his story "Glory Jumpers" about training at Camp Menard in 1953, Harvey Versteeg (MSO-53) adds this aside. "This exiting procedure got me in trouble four years later," he said. "In the Army, you grab the ends of the reserve chute so you don't have to look for the release handle in an emergency. The first three times out of the tower there, I said to myself, 'You're going to grab the ends of the reserve.'

"And each time I went out the door, reflex action took over and I crossed my arms over the chute as we learned in the Forest Service

"When I slid down to the end of the cable, the receiving sergeant said, 'Get a gig, sir.' And I did 10 more push-ups." 🐿



Al Dunton Memorial
Photo's Courtesy Bob Webber (MSO-62)



Layout Design, by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)