

Remembering “Big Al” Dunton

Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

Our great jumper boss, wildland fire manager and friend **Al Dunton** (FBX-67), passed away July 18, 2010, at his home in Sparks, Nevada.

Al took his leave while in the loving care of his wife, Mary, daughters Melanie and Amber, family and friends. We who admired and loved him from a distance are thankful for that.

The memorial service at Silver Saddle Ranch was a fine tribute to a man who meant so much to so many. We called him “Big Al” because for most of us he made a big difference in our lives.

By early summer of 1973 the Alaska Smokejumpers were on the chopping block with plans to replace them statewide with helicopter initial attack. BLM overhead had simply had it with the incorrigible and irrepressible irreverence that defined the crew.

Take an already-wild bunch, toss in some “Dirty Dozen” types who were migrating to Alaska to avoid any people or things that meant to control them, and then add a half-dozen vets recently back from the war in Vietnam – many carrying a fair amount of rage – put them in an old, abandoned T-hangar out on Fort Wainwright with no electricity, plumbing, heat or running water, and you have the situation that young Al Dunton faced his first summer as the new base manager.

Fire season was slow in getting started. On overcast days the blowing rain and the wind would moan through the old hangar in a way that was flat-out depressing. The jumpers grumbled and complained, played poker, accused each other of cheating and argued about whatever subject came up. Others hunkered in the background, nursing hangovers, writing love poems or plinking on cheap guitars.

It was about that time that Al started coming over from his office in the FAS building and holding Friday crew meetings. He listened to us like no boss I'd ever been around. On and on we'd rail about how the T-hangar was a toxic waste site, and that the Army was a pain in the butt to be around, and that helitack was getting too many fires that should have been jumper fires.

Al would just hang in there with us and hear us out. That was his way. Before long, he had us understanding that the problems weren't just his – they were ours, and that we could solve them together.

That's when Al got back the loft. He got us back doing all the para-cargo. He went after the Volpar so we could beat helitack to more fires. He did all that, and at the same time, he continued to let us be us – wild and still hard to manage. Time after time, he bailed guys (even pilots) out of jail. Time after time, he stood up for us against the Army base commander.

Al had vision and administrative guts. He drew us in by listening, getting us in the game, then helping us see the vision that we could take back all of Alaska. And we did.

While there are many great things to say about Al's smarts in managing people, I'd like to say one more thing about him as a person. I've heard it said that we admire a man for his courage ... but we love him for his vulnerability. Sometimes we'd come into work and find him passed out in the ready room, a few dollars wadded up in a shirt pocket, his hair messed up, smelling of cigarettes and booze. He'd been out gambling and drinking.

He was not only our boss and friend; he was a man who knew us and trusted us enough to be there like that, knowing we would give him the same grace he'd give us. For that we won't be forgetting the man.

“Big Al” was not just a fine boss and extraordinary leader and manager, but even more, Alan J. Dunton was one of us.

Tom Boatner (FBX-80)

On July 31, 2010, friends and family gathered at the Silver Saddle Ranch in Carson City, Nev., to celebrate the life of Alan Dunton.

Al was a legendary figure in BLM smokejumping and fire management. He was the manager of the Alaska Smokejumper base for 12 years and was the man who turned it from a base on the way to extinction to a base that was aggressive and highly competent.

Later in his career, he was the state fire management officer for BLM Nevada, and he retired as the BLM's national fire director. He was the base manager when I rookied in Alaska, and I learned leadership lessons from him that I carried throughout my career.

He was the consummate modest, behind-the-scenes operator. He made good things happen and didn't care if he got the credit. He empowered the people who worked for him to use their own judgment, common sense, and decision-making to solve problems. He was

highly respected and admired in the BLM, and in his last assignment, I believe he and his Forest Service counterpart, John Chambers, had a relationship based on mutual respect and taking care of business without getting hung up on agency turf.

On a hot summer evening, under the shade of the cottonwoods along the Carson River, a group of old friends gathered to remember Al's legacy and share stories about his life and his career. Al had a positive impact on many lives and many fire careers. He will be missed.

Fred Wolf

I'm writing this for my fellow BLMers and as associate state director in both Alaska and Nevada during his service.

Alan Dunton needs to be recognized for his work in BLM. Under Alaska Fire Chief Joe Kastelic, Al was a key player for the largest wildfire organization in the world. He was a person management listened to because he always made sense.

In that era, the complex Alaska Fire Program was self-running. The state director's input was often limited to briefings because Alaska Fire did its planning, knew what had to be done and did it. It was the same in Nevada during Al's tenure as chief of the fire program.

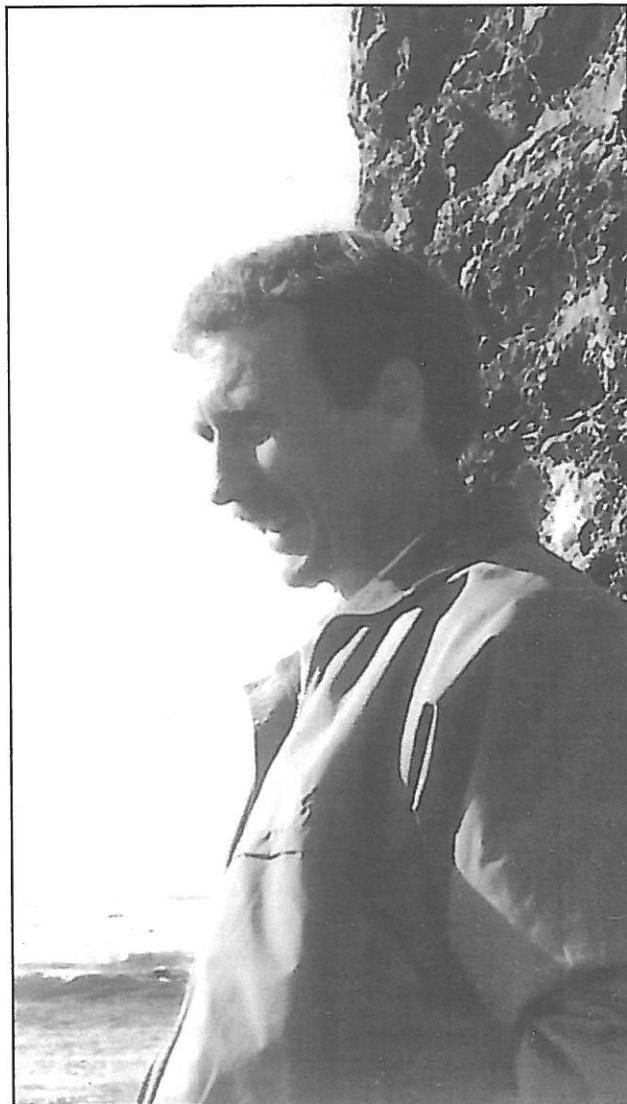
Alaska experience gave Al a tremendous background for his job in managing the Nevada Fire program. In summary, Al was the type of manager whom state directors like to have working for them. What's more, he was the kind of boss his employees liked working for, maybe without exception. He was absolutely straightforward and considerate both ways. He seemed always calm, collected and thoughtful, which are good traits for a chief of fire.

In his quiet way, Al proved he had the complete management package. He was smart at what he did, analytical, was dedicated and loyal to the mission, took care of his employees, aggressively planned for the future and made good decisions. What also helped tremendously was his ability to coordinate with other fire agencies to achieve the cooperation necessary for fire protection in the more-complex modern environment.

Al Dunton's performance was really appreciated by BLM because he had the all around abilities to serve the fire program in complex times, the employees involved and the state director, who could rest assured the program was in good hands. He was an outstanding example of how to do that.

Rod Dow (MYC-68)

Al was soft-spoken, but there was never any question who the boss was. In 1976 we all met at the house of Gordy Henson (MSO-63) for a pig roast on a Friday



Al Dunton 1992 (Courtesy Mary Dunton)

night after work. The "Pig Party" tradition that the Alaska rookies now throw every year began that night. I was on first load so we were on standby at the T-Hangar until 8 o'clock and then jumped the party.

It was a pretty standard beer-around-a-campfire affair until a couple of the boys shed their clothes, but that's another story.

At about 2 in the morning Tommy Hilliard (MYC-67), the designated driver of the government bus, was just collecting the last of the mud wrestlers when those of us drunks, who had already been gathered, got tired of waiting for him and decided to steal the bus. Someone had already glass taped the huge pig's head to the grill, so I'm sure we made quite a picture driving down the Steese Highway.

We stopped at the corner of Steese and College and picked up three hippies who, it turned out, were smoking marijuana. We continued right through downtown Fairbanks, dropped off the hippies, and then back to Ft.

Wainwright and miraculously made it through the gate unscathed.

The next Friday meeting Al slopped into the room, smoking a cigarette as usual, sat down, and put his feet up on the table in front of him. The room was silent for about 30 seconds and then Al very calmly said, "I'd appreciate it if you guys wouldn't get drunk, steal the government bus, drive down the Steese with the pig's head taped to the grill, pick up dope smoking hippies, drive right down Two Street, and then onto a military installation. Think you could avoid that in the future?"

We were good employees, so we didn't do that again.

Tom Hilliard (MYC-67)

Alan Dunton died recently from a brain tumor. Relatively few people outside Western firefighting circles ever heard of him, but anybody who worked for or with him will never forget Big Al Dunton.

There are bosses, there are managers, and then there are leaders. Big Al was a leader.

From what the old salts said, Big Al could have been one of the most undistinguished smokejumper crewmembers who ever loaded in a plane. But fate thrust him into the leadership role for the Alaska Smokejumper Project when the base manager died one winter in a trailer fire. Al became the base manager because nobody else wanted the job.

Prior to the assumption of the reins by Al, the proj-

Tribute to Al Dunton

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

Well, we went down
By the old ranch house
Coming out of the Great Basin
And the banks of the Yukon

We gathered
Under the cottonwoods
And you could see where the river was
Following its green line down the valley

Milling around, stiff at first
Working our way back
So the wrinkles and limps faded

We teamed up with the young jumpers in our midst

Hustling, moving ice and beer cans
Food to the shade
Introductions all around

A wonderful family, old friends
Jumpers, pilots, cooks, neighbors
Folks that worked with fire
Cared about the land

And cared about people
I think Al cared about that most

Our good boss

We talked in little clusters
Took turns at the mike
The preacher helped us relax
And we told our stories
Shuffling dirt at our feet

The wind came up
Cottonwoods fluttered
Afternoon breeze keeping us going

And we went till after dark

But before that
And, after I spoke
I walked down to the fields
I guess I was trying to keep folks from seeing I was crying
And I just watched that river line
Sagebrush hills
Juniper and Pinion Pine

Till I got my bearings and looked up to the sky –

Down here in Carson
Lord, it's been so many miles
Standing along this fence line
I'm thankful
Al, thanks
For helping me get this far

ect had degenerated into a sad state of incompetence. Women contractors packed and repaired parachutes for the jumpers. The supply warehouse employees did the cargo dropping because the jumpers were lazy and incapable. Jumpers lounged around all day, sleeping and waiting for a fire call.

Finally, a helper named Rocky was hired as a temporary employee to do odd jobs around the base. If a jumper was ever given an order to perform a task, the standard answer was: "Let Rocky do it."

Within a few years of Al's appointment, the Alaska Smokejumpers led the firefighting world in innovation, speed of attack, parachute technology, training, aircraft use in aerial attack, and fire-suppression effectiveness. His men and aircraft covered an area 10 times the size of Georgia, or close to 365 million acres. The paracargo operation, now run totally by smokejumpers, dropped more cargo to forest fires in Alaska than any paracargo operation in the world, except for the U.S. and Russian militaries.

In 1979, Al assigned expert Alaska jumpers to develop a bold and innovative personnel delivery system utilizing sportjumping ram-air parachutes. This system allowed Alaska smokejumpers to jump in winds as strong as 28 miles per hour, as opposed to the status quo system of round chutes only capable of handling winds of 9 miles per hour.

Instead of landing in their plane and waiting several hours for winds to subside, the ram-air parachutes allowed jumpers to commence initial attack within minutes of arrival over fires fanned by high winds.

Smokejumper effectiveness is directly linked to speed of attack – the faster men can begin fighting the fire, the smaller it is and the easier it is to control.

What qualities did Al possess to make him such a memorable leader? Nobody can put a finger on that answer, but he inspired us by setting the goals and empowering us to accomplish them. He mixed humanity and duty very effectively. Talented jumpers from many other bases wanted to come to Alaska to develop their talents. They knew that Al would give them the chance and the resources to do that.

In 1978, I committed the unpardonable sin of smokejumpers – I declared a fire to be out. A short time later the fire reared its ugly head to burn several hundred additional acres, requiring several jumpers and aircraft to fly hundreds of miles to finally extinguish it.

The fire was near the Athabaskan Indian village of Allakaket. We initially determined the cause of the first fire to be carelessness on the part of an Indian from the village. My crew and I did the best we could, and we always asked ourselves before leaving a fire: "Are we willing to bet our jobs that this fire is out?" We each

answered "yes," but somehow we missed a hot spot, and it re-burned a couple of days later.

When the fire was finally out, Al held an inquiry and thoroughly investigated the circumstances of the second burn. It was obvious that I was responsible as fire boss for not ensuring the fire was dead out prior to demobilizing. Shame and pain had racked my soul for several days, and I seriously considered resigning.

As discussions at the inquiry wound to a close, Al looked at me and said, "Forget it, Tom. The Indians went back up there and set it." His leadership saved my career as well as the careers of several employees he never knew. Over the ensuing years those men under my leadership continued to reap the benefits of Big Al Dunton's mercy for a distraught smokejumper who let a fire get away on a riverbank near Allakaket.

Bill Cramer (NIFC-90)

This wasn't an average load flying out to Fire #501 on Aug. 3. With more than eight jumpers on board and an all-Alaskan load, it wasn't typical for the busy 2010 Alaska fire season. It was probably fitting considering the circumstances, though most of the jumpers didn't know that this mission was special.

We dutifully completed our pin checks as the muddy waters of the Yukon passed underneath. The southern edge of Fire No. 501 soon followed as the jumpship proceeded to the northern edge. Small and medium columns of smoke rose from the vast spruce and hardwood forest northeast of Stevens Village.

Tom Kubichek (FBX-90), J-07 spotter, made his way back to the rear station to prepare for jump operations. "Door coming open. Guard your reserves!" was our warning that our time onboard was coming to a close.

Tom's streamers showed 400 yards of drift with lots of up air. It also showed that our assignment to burn a half-mile of line between two lakes would have to be attempted against the wind.

The jump spot was on the southern edge of Tanjoga Lake. None of us worried about landing in the lake, but we paid close attention to the subtle colors of the grass along the shore. Green usually means you'll get wet on landing; brown is usually drier.

Tom indicated he'd be kicking us in a 2-3-3 configuration as the 900-horsepower turbines powered us up to 3000 feet AGL.

"Two jumpers. Are you ready? Are your leg straps tight? Hook up!"

Matt Allen (FBX-95) and I hooked-up our static line clips and listened to Tom's briefing. No surprises, though I laughed at the thought of having kicked Tom out as the IC on this fire on June 25 when it was only 30 acres. I appreciated Tom returning the favor.

The Upper Yukon Zone FMO, **Steve Theisen** (FBX-86), probably wasn't laughing, as the fire had been problematic from the first day. Severe drought conditions, scattered structures, numerous scattered Native Allotments, proximity to Steven's Village, and Doyon Corp. land ownership all contributed to Steve's headaches. More than 80 jumpers and 20 crews had been on this fire in the previous six weeks and this fire was far from over.

"Get in the door."

My jump partner got in the door and both of us completed our four-point checks: "Drogue release, main release, reserve, lower RSL."

Focusing on the task at hand was important as Tom made two minor corrections to our final.

"Get ready!"

The command was quickly followed by a slap on Matt's right shoulder. Matt exited into the roar of air, and I swung into the door he had just vacated. The slap on my shoulder triggered the same response. A blur of scenes came into peripheral view – a rapidly diminishing jumpship, smoke columns, and a mix of boreal forests with intermittent lakes.

One object captured my mind's focus, the drogue release handle.

"Jump thousand, look thousand, reach thousand, wait thousand, pull thousand."

The CR-360 main parachute opened smoothly and easily passed the opening checks.

"Check your canopy, check your airspace, right turn, left turn, stall check."

We both had parachutes we wanted to land. Matt had already initiated bomb turns with his DC-7 main parachute to gain vertical separation. The CR-360's tendency to "float" would make my job pretty simple so long as the next stick didn't catch up with me.

We both executed left-hand patterns to keep us from flying over the lake. There was plenty of time to get a good view of the section we'd be working and to simply enjoy the Alaska scenery. The "up air" was a minor hassle, but a few sinks and stalls soon put us in a good position for turning final.

The world got smaller as we both focused on where exactly we wanted to land. I chose a dry-looking clump of grass about 10 yards shy of where Matt landed. The wind was close to ideal and the CR-360 responded admirably to my half-brake flare.

We were soon joined by our other bros, **Randy Foland** (FBX-01), **Branden Kobayashi** (FBX-05), **Brian Kirkman** (FBX-08), **Robert Miller** (FBX-05), **Isaiah Fischer** (RDD-05) and **Greg Conaway** (FBX-04).

As we gathered the cargo and bagged our jump gear, I considered the relative merits of several locations I had

spotted on my jump. We were here to do a job for the zone, but I had been given the honor of a job that was more important in the bigger scheme of things. I wanted to do it right.

Al Dunton's ashes were safely secured in my right leg during the jump, and I moved them to my PG bag as we prepared to burn the half-mile section of line against the wind. The test burn went very well, but it was obvious we'd need to take it slow. Eating smoke and catching the spots weren't going to be a lot of fun.

The fuel loadings weren't that heavy, but it was obvious that rain had been a stranger this summer. By 2100 we had made it about half way down the line and were worried about losing the burn window due to an increased hardwood component and the unfavorable west winds.

God smiled on us about then as the winds suddenly shifted and blew from the east. God also laughed as the AFMO flew over a few minutes later and could plainly see that winds were in our favor and we should obviously be done with the half-mile burn by now. Things like this seem to be standard in life.

About 40 minutes later, we finished up the southern end of the burn and actually got to enjoy some clear air. Life remained good for a few more minutes until the west winds returned and our visibility went to nil, and we started wishing for oxygen. We caught all the spot fires, though it came at the cost of multiple bee stings.

At 2300, Matt declared the line safe to leave for the evening and we headed north to set up camp.

I left camp shortly before midnight with Al Dunton's ashes. Moving west along the lakeshore, I came to a small peninsula that jutted into the lake enough to provide good views of the landscape. Darkness began to fall, but the occasional torching of spruce illuminated the smokey air.

With a short prayer, I scattered Al's ashes amongst the cattails. In the vastness of Alaska's interior with fire to the east, south, and west, I thought this was the type of spot any Alaska smokejumper would be happy to have for a final resting spot.

We finished securing the line. Despite the solid burn, much fuel remained as the burned trees fell over. Matt and I had to hustle down the line the next day when a large fire whirl came out of the black and threw multiple spots across our line. The remaining days consisted of mopping up and dropping hazard trees.

During this time I kept an eye on the spot where Al's ashes were scattered. In close proximity to the spot I saw Arctic hares, loons, sandhill cranes, Wilson snipe, tundra swans, a large bull moose, and only a few mosquitoes. All in all, a great spot for a great smokejumper making his last jump. 🦋

A Fond Farewell For Al Dunton

by Pat Shearer (Missoula '67)

I first met Al in 1968. I think my first comment was: "Someone needs to put a new transmission in that guy. He seems to be stuck in low gear." It didn't take me long to learn, just like everyone else (especially a few political opponents), that Al's mind worked much faster than his feet.

The following years were filled with many adventures. The job itself was "Jumper Heaven." Add to that the hunting, fishing, floating rivers, and the ill-conceived search for the big win at a place

called Sam's. We were constantly trying to live a lifetime of adventure in the next 15 minutes. Luckily, for both of us, we finally realized our big win was at home waiting for us all that time.

Al's building of the Alaska smokejumpers and his rise within the organization is well documented. His ability to think way ahead of the pack was legendary, but the one thing he had above all others – and an attribute which is rare these days – is that Al had class.

Everyone felt comfortable with Al almost from the moment they met. From behind the scenes, he would help people who were bidding for jobs within the organization – many of them never knowing that he was instrumental in helping them along the career path they were seeking.

You could turn your back to Al and not feel the sting of the knife. His smokejumpers, including me, revered him always knowing that a man of his caliber would move on to bigger things – and he did.

Don't get me wrong – Al was as human as the rest of us. He had his weak points and the only thing he had in common with Mother

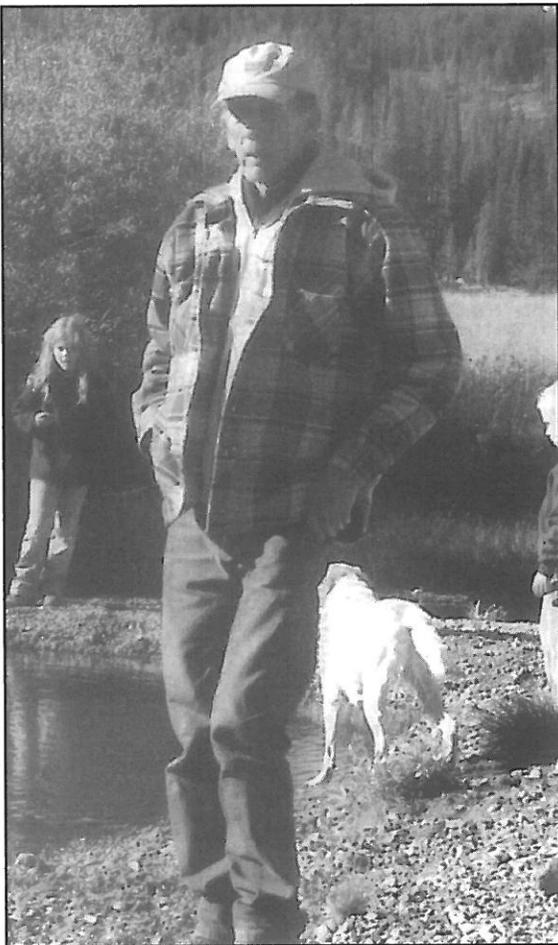
Teresa was that if they were both running the PT test, it would be at about the same speed. Actually, I think Mother Teresa had the edge there, too.

During our jumping years, and when Al was in the Supreme Commander position, the hat he wore was as my boss. I respected his position as my boss. But occasionally, my quest for adventure would go too far and I would be called to Al's woodshed.

After a couple of times, I realized there was a simple pattern to his reaction to my sins. If it was a small sin, things were going to be all right, and what I had done was considered minor. Al would put his fingertips on his forehead; slowly move his head from side to side, and in his best fatherly voice mutter, "Shearer, Shearer, Shearer."

If it was a mortal sin and serious because I really crossed the line, he would slam the flat of his hand on the desk and shout "SHEARER!" and proceed to work me over. I could put up a dignified defense when it was three "Shearers." One "Shearer" and a desk slam automatically triggered my begging-for-mercy defense.

Usually after either one, I would return to work. A call would come later in the day. It would be Al saying he thought I was in need of employee counseling and I was to meet him at Tommy's Elbow Room for remediation. I am going to have to check, but I should have some kind of certificate for receiving the most employee counseling in a drinking establishment.



Al Dunton 2009 with grandchildren Anna/Wyatt
(Courtesy Mary Dunton)

I'm trying to keep this light but in reality, my heart is broken. I was so lucky to spend most of the winter in Reno and was able to visit with him and relive some of our past. We would have lunch several times a week and even did some mild gambling.

I recall early fall of 1973. The Anchorage district called and said that due to warm weather, they had a fire near Marshall, Alaska, that needed to be manned. They were going to send a light helicopter that we could keep at the fire and use at our discretion.

They wanted us to monitor the fire and try to keep it in check. There were only four of us at the base, but Al told Anchorage we would man the fire. He told us that we were going to catch it.

The next morning we loaded the Grumman Goose, taking extra fuses and rations. "Diamond" Don Wahl (MSO-63) would spot and Al, LeRoy Cook (CJ-64), and I would jump. We worked the fire for a week. Al would drop LeRoy and me off to burn out from different anchor points, and he would throw fuses from the helicopter.

The last day we worked the fire, we were burning out from a small river. LeRoy was dropped off and Al took me to my starting point. We landed, shut the copter down, and ate a C-ration lunch and smoked our mandatory cigarettes. I shouldered my PG bag full of fuses and trusty C-rations.

Al started back to the helicopter but then turned and said, "Shearer, if things go bad here, if it gets too hot – then we will meet up on the other side of the river."

Well, we actually caught that fire. The next day the rains started. So we overnighted in

McGrath and debriefed at a local tavern in town. Al said he was pleased with our performance, but there were two things that bothered him.

One was that Anchorage would not give us credit for catching the fire, and second, someone was high-grading the C-rations for the pound cake, peaches, and C-ration cigarettes. I suggested that it was more than likely the helicopter pilot.

The reason I tell this story is that this fire showed me Al's tremendous will to win. At no time did he consider backing off and letting the fire burn. He was going to beat this thing!

Over the years, the Marshall Fire would occasionally come up when we would talk over old times. He would always bring up the helicopter pilot who high-graded the C-rations. This was getting worrisome as it was bordering on the Caine Mutiny and Capt. Queeg and the strawberries.

I had been in Reno recently to try to help Mary care for Al in his last days. Al had stopped eating and was in the hospital hooked up to IVs. I was due to leave the next morning. I wanted to try and build up his will to fight this thing – this insidious cancer.

I decided to talk about the Marshall Fire and see if he could regain that will to win which had seen him through in the past. Dick O'Connell and I drove to the hospital. Melanie and Amber were sitting with their dad. We visited for a bit and then I asked if I could speak to Al in private. Everyone left the room and when I was alone with him, I leaned down, looked into his eyes, and asked him if he remembered the Marshall Fire. He just stared.

I told him, "You have to fight this thing, use every weapon they

offer you – chemotherapy, radiation – whatever they offer." And then I stopped – what was I doing? This is the man who taught me and many others that the odds were never too great, that you always fight to win. I realized that he had been fighting to win. He was going against the odds and he was losing.

So I took his hand, looked into his eyes and told him what he had told me so many years ago on the banks of the river near Marshall: "Al, my friend, if things do go bad, if you get overrun – then we'll meet up on the other side of the river. Do you understand what I am saying?"

Ever so slightly, he squeezed my hand and he smiled. I left for Alaska the next day. He passed away several days later.

It could accurately be said that Al was the best of us, but the description I think he would prefer was that he was one of us.

Al and I had a great time playing one-upmanship, verbally sparring over small things that really didn't mean much in the big picture. I want to thank him for his honest and challenging leadership and his friendship.

I thank him for enhancing my life experience. Life would have been very boring without him. But I really want to thank him for the pound cake, peaches, and C-ration cigarettes. Yes, it was me – sorry, helicopter person! Yes, it was me, I readily confess. I ate it when Al was asleep, when he was awake, when he flew over me in the helicopter. And when I was done, I smoked many C-ration cigarettes.

This fall and next summer, I'm going to revisit some of the old hunting and fishing places we went. Sheep hunting might be a stretch – but I will try! With my Irish imagination turned on,

I'll be listening when the wind blows across the shale slides, or the water swirling around the rocks in the Anchor River – I'll be listening for the words that

tell me that “Yes, it's bad, but in the long run everything is going to be all right.” I'll be listening for “SHEARER, SHEARER, SHEARER.”

So long, Al. See you on the other side of the river!

And P.S. – God, please let Al smoke. It will save you a lot of grief. 🙏

Thoughts From A Daughter

by Melanie Dunton (McCall '99)

In the weeks following my dad's death, I feel as if I received a rare gift: the opportunity to get to know him better even as we said goodbye. Through the many e-mails, phone calls, visits and, of course, tributes at his memorial service, I learned of a man who was the consummate professional, the unconventional leader, the incorrigible gambler, the devoted friend, the supportive boss, the avid outdoorsman.

While in my adulthood I figured out, like any child, that my parents did have lives before children, and that they were complex beings just like “regular people.” There were certain things that I could never have learned about my dad directly from him, certain things that took a tragedy like his death for me to get the chance to hear from others.

What an honor to know how much he meant to so many, and what an honor to have his story told through the eyes of so many in the pages of a magazine devoted to the profession he loved. It is obvious that the story of “Al the boss, smokejumper, friend, colleague, drinking buddy, etc. etc.” is covered by fine people like **Pat Shearer** (MSO-67) and **Bill Cramer** (MSO-70), so I would like to share a little bit about how my dad as a family man came to be – something I am sure many who knew him in his early days would have sworn on all that was holy would never happen.

Someone at my dad's memorial mentioned how hard it is to balance work and family, and he did that beautifully. I try today to achieve that balance with my own kids.

As most know and many remember, Al, circa 1970, worked hard and lived hard; days found him at the T-Hangar, probably getting an extraordinary amount of work done while appearing to actually direct very little. I'd also wager there was a cigarette protruding nonchalantly from his lips; he once told my mom that he switched each year around January from Marlboros to Carltons for his “annual journey to physical fitness.”

After hours ... I've only heard tell ... Dad, Pat, and

a handful of others could be spotted at The Officer's Club or Sam's, drinking, gambling, storytelling, or doing some combination of the three. I believe the family would still own property somewhere off the Steese Highway had it not been for a little too much of the first two.

Dad always downplayed the “legendary” Fairbanks days, which slowed considerably sometime around the birth of his children. I do remember certain glimpses into this part of his past, like the time he quipped, “The hard part about winter was when it was dark, you felt like it was time to go to Sam's ... but it was almost always dark.”

I suppose the darkness also was to blame for the spur-of-the-moment trip he and Bob Schaepli decided to take their wives on to Hawaii in December of 1977. In some capacity I went along, just a month and a half from making my debut in the world. I'm sure my mom was thrilled to find herself with child in the middle of bikini country.

Often in my high school years I would wish my dad to be seized with “aloha fever” after a couple of whiskeys, but the most impulsive and irresponsible thing he did after a night out when I was a kid was to buy a horse at an auction – never mind that he knew next to nothing of the breed – and once referring to their hooves as “paws.”

Of course, hard living is only the stuff of legend if it is accompanied by hard working, as accomplishing the two concurrently with any sort of distinction is exceedingly difficult. Dad excelled at both at the same time, for a long time.

As **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65), **John Culbertson** (FBX-69) and **Pat Shearer** (through his daughter, Heather) explained so articulately at his memorial, my dad and a handful of others guided the Alaska Smokejumpers through their formative years, and many went on to become leaders and innovators in fire management.

I wasn't old enough back then to understand basic physics, let alone the finer points of aerial firefighter delivery, but I think those known today as "squares" partially have my dad to thank for not still being known as "rounds."

I knew Al, circa 1990 much better. Once we moved south, though his career continued to flourish, his life revolved entirely around his family. His new friends – people like Kevin and Fran Hull and "the state office crew" – were dear to him, but the end of most work weeks meant loading up the truck and heading to Webber Lake, where he watched with proud eyes as he pitted his daughters against each other in trout fishing contests ... which Amber usually won with little effort while reading a Danielle Steel novel. He knew he could count on his beloved Mary to keep the peace while I seethed.

My dad had a way at home, like he did at work, of bringing out the best in us minus any guilt or pressure. I ran faster when I saw his face along the fence at track meets, and studied a little harder to get the "A" in math, not because he'd take me to the Nugget Casino's seafood buffet, but because he'd smile at my report card and say simply, "Good job, kid."

When I started jumping he never once asked, "Why not BLM?" though I do remember him underscoring the importance of a good landing roll if I was going to jump rounds.

When I tired of playing four-square on the tarmac in Battle Mountain and got homesick, he drove three hours each way to pick me up for a one-night visit home, and when I broke my arm on my first fire jump he listened for an hour as I cried into the phone, sure that I had ruined the family legacy – and Dad assured me in his quiet way that I had not.

I'll never forget when he came to watch my practice jumps in McCall; he didn't say much, but I remember knowing how he felt – he was proud of me and that was all I needed.

Grandpa Al emerged seemingly out of thin air when his first grandchild, Anna, was born. The man who had changed only enough diapers to avoid sleeping on the couch each night when his daughters were babies now rolled an adoring 9-month-old around the backyard in an umbrella stroller, proudly wearing a baseball cap labeled "Grandpa" in red puffy paint and singing "The Wayward Wind."

When she'd cry, he'd dance, and something about the way he resembled a 6-foot-2 marionette smoking a Barclay would make her laugh. In fact, it was so successful a mood changer that he adopted the same routine for each of his three subsequent grandchildren.

My dad was also an innovator in grandparenting.

Though none of his inventions ever made it to the patent stage, his polystyrene duct taped to the counter corners saved many a toddler's head from too sharp a corner cut, and the way he slurped green beans off a plate at dinner made even the most veggie-phobic of 2-year-olds want to eat some, too.

I'll never forget when he came to watch my practice jumps in McCall; he didn't say much, but I remember knowing how he felt – he was proud of me and that was all I needed.

He was never too busy or too much in a hurry not to let one of the kids help him hammer a nail or mow a piece of lawn, and often my mom would come around the corner to find the remnants of whatever fun Grandpa and the kids had enjoyed that day, including the furniture dolly that he rigged up as a sort of scooter-slash-wagon, or the BB-gun shooting range he set up in the garage directly parallel to my mom's new car.

They all adored him, and they'll all miss him terribly.

My dad, like anyone, had his faults; he watched Fox News, detested yogurt, and had the annoying habit of never forgetting anything when he went on a camping trip, usually being able to produce two or three of whatever it was anyone else forgot.

He confronted his share of demons, fought his share of battles, and lived through tragedies, but he emerged on the other side of each obstacle wiser for it, and had the capacity to take that wisdom and better those around him. He embodied something rare ... some intangible, almost indescribable combination of intelligence, integrity, compassion and sincerity. He achieved much in the most unobtrusive way possible, and he hated being the center of attention for any reason, preferring instead to lead by example and let success speak for itself.

In spite of his tendency to shrink from the spotlight, though, I know he'd be touched to see what a fine group of people came to bid him farewell in July. He might have been sitting in the back row, as far from the crowd as possible, with an O'Douls and his grandkids, but he'd be touched.

So, here's to my dad, and the fact that everyone he knew is a little better person today because of that relationship. 🍄

Smokejumper Center Seeks Donations

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Barry Hicks (MSO-64) wants \$150,000, and he wants it this winter.

Hicks swears he won't use the dough for a Mediterranean yacht cruise or a gold-plated skiing vacation in the Alps.

Instead, the president of the National Smokejumper Center says it'll be spent to dig basements and build foundations for the four buildings that comprise the historical Madison Ranger Station. They're to be moved from their current location in the center of West Yellowstone to city property directly across the street from the thriving visitors center at the Yellowstone National Park entrance.

The ranger's house, office, garage and barn will make up the new center, an environmental education activity for kids that began in 2006 in West Yellowstone.

My wife, Sally, and I spent five days as Junior Smokejumper volunteers the first week of August, and we came away impressed with what the center is trying to do. As Sally and I can attest, it's a worthwhile and fun experience.

"Trying" is the operative word here because, during the days we were on station, only 10 kids showed up for the program which is designed to provide a bit of education about ecology, forest fires and smokejumping.

The lack of attendance may be as a result of a pair of factors: a paucity of information describing the program and the appearance of the current compound.

I noted when we arrived at the historical station where the program has been conducted that the container affixed to the front fence, which should have contained flyers, was empty; it was still empty when we left. I presume brochure racks around town were also barren.

The weeds in the one-acre Madison Ranger Station

compound where the program is conducted are knee-high, and no American flag was flying.

I visited the current ranger station where I attempted to borrow a riding lawn mower. I was turned down with the explanation that the project was on its own for maintenance, even though the historical station is, I presume, still on Forest Service rolls.

Future programs will be conducted at the station's new high-visibility location, and that should go a long way to solving the non-attendance situation. And I presume the station's appearance will improve once it's on city-owned property.

About our week: Sally and I were put up in the station's house, a comfortable two-bedroom facility with a shower, well-appointed kitchen and dining room. Our host for the week was **Chuck Flach** (MSO-68), who's been a volunteer for several years.

The office assistant and environmental education teacher was Laura Stumhofer, a Brown University student whose father was a retardant pilot. She vacated her room in what was the ranger's family quarters so we could move in, and took up residence in a bedroom behind the ranger station's office.

Hicks wasn't present during our week. He was working in the Gulf of Mexico on the oil cleanup campaign.

Flach briefed us on the program, then we watched the first day's presentation. In subsequent days, Sally and I pitched in when there were kids.

During the first half-hour Laura described the fire triangle and, through a series of photos and drawings, led the kids to the conclusion that forest fires are neither good nor bad, but some have to be extinguished. She also had them pluck and identify various plants from the profusion growing in the compound.

Other stations were devoted to smokejumping. Those included a dummy in jump gear beneath a parachute hanging in a tree, simulated "jumps" by the kids from an "airplane door" about 18 inches from the ground, the flaring of a parachute with the kids rushing underneath, a look at fire packs, cargo chutes, tools, a fire shelter, and a female dummy in firefighters' Nomex clothing.

The kids practiced pull-ups and sit-ups, and then ran around the station's interior perimeter, "working out just like real smokejumpers do." Their three-hour session ended with a written test administered by Laura that reinforced what they had learned.

The center also made available a very large smoke-



Youngsters flare a parachute (courtesy Frank Burhenn)

jumper suit which the children could don for pictures by their parents. Barry told me he's negotiating with the Missoula jump base to obtain kid-sized jumpsuits which that base uses in its Junior Smokejumper program.

Although we were disappointed by the sparse attendance, it was a very nice week. Those kids who did participate obviously had a great time and enjoyed their experiences.

We didn't receive an information packet in advance, but thought we might have time for some recreating. And we did – our volunteer duties took the mornings, but we spent a couple of afternoons in Yellowstone Park. Our bicycles were right handy for touring the town, and we whacked away with our golf clubs at a course about 20 miles from West Yellowstone.

The town is well-equipped with grocery stores, restaurants, museums and coffee houses, so we weren't roughing it in any sense.

After we arrived home the center mailed us a stipend of \$75, which we donated back with a few more bucks thrown in.

Which brings us back to the first paragraph of this article. The center is a 501(c)(3) corporation, so deductions are tax-deductible. If you wish to donate, you can mail your check to the National Smokejumper Center, P.O. Box 264, West Yellowstone, MT 59758. You can also donate via credit card or through PayPal's secure website. The center's Web address is www.smokejumpercenter.org, and its email address is smokejumperctr@gmail.com. To contact Barry directly, his phone number is (406) 244-5025.

The center will need volunteers next summer and, owing to its new location, it will probably need a bunch. In addition to those who would like to take part in the smokejumper aspects of the program, he'd like a cadre of volunteers with carpentry, electrical, plumbing and landscaping skills. They would provide guidance to an Elderhostel volunteer group of 20 to 25 retirees who will be on site in mid-May of 2011. He'll furnish the tools and materials for the project.

The NSA Board Is A Bit Wary

The National Smokejumper Association has been supportive of the center's program, but several NSA board members want to keep the relationship at arm's length, at least for now.

NSA President John Twiss (RAC-67) said, "The board is sitting back. We want to make sure the program is successful before we endorse it fully. Right now, there's not a lot of enthusiasm for it."



Mark Petroni teaching fire ecology (courtesy Frank Burbhenn)

He also related that Hicks has invited the board to establish NSA headquarters at West Yellowstone and partner with the center. Thus far the board has declined that invitation.

Hicks has been counseled by board members to check out employees, volunteers and local residents on the national sex offenders website. He says that he has done that for employees and local residents, but not for volunteers. However, he says, with the move to the new venue, he intends to ask the West Yellowstone Police Department to conduct background checks on all persons affiliated with the project, including volunteers.

Our own recent check of the Web site revealed three sex offenders who live in West Yellowstone, and one of them is classified as "violent." Hicks said that we were supposed to have been shown photos of those persons when we checked in for our workweek. However, that was not done.

A board member also has suggested to Hicks that the center should affiliate with the American Camping Association or a similar organization to take advantage of information networks provided by such organizations. Such a move would require the center to comply with the standards under which those organizations operate.

Hicks told me that he doesn't think such an association would benefit the National Smokejumper Center since the children who take part in its programs are not campers, but day users of the facility.

He did say that the center buys liability insurance that covers the buildings, employees and volunteers.

But despite the board's hesitancy to become active partners in the center's operation, the two entities are working together. In June 2008, the NSA loaned the center \$6,000. That sum was repaid in September of that year.

And during each of the last two years, the board gave grants of \$1,000 to the center. Also during the past two years, center personnel have sold a total of \$718 in merchandise for the NSA. ♣



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan
(Fairbanks '96)

Fire season was too good to keep to ourselves in 2010. We shared 1,090 fire jumps with 197 boosters from the BLM and USFS. Our best jump season in 20 years kept our paracargo section rolling—dropping 715,570 pounds of cargo to fires and projects across the state – the most tonnage dropped in the post-Argosy (C1) era. We had seven jump planes on the ramp in 2010, led by the incomparable Casas, logging 1,218 total flight hours last year.

Our head count was 67. We jumped our first fire on April 27. Our last fire was jumped on Sept. 28—the latest, and one of the coldest on record. **Jeff McPhetridge** (MYC-93) and **Randy Foland** (FBX-01) endured the experience, reporting suppression in -17 degrees was truly unlikely.

Negligible precipitation in parts of the Upper Yukon Zone kept fire managers and smokejumpers busy all year. Approximately 1.1 million acres burned across the state in 2010. One fire that burned down the appropriately named Farewell Lodge has burned for three years.

A few samples of 2010 Alaska fire names include Deadman Island, Wright Way, Sucker River 2, Tipook-tulearuk River, and the Klikhtentozna Creek Fires.

Two fires – Pat Creek and Canvasback Lake—were breadbaskets, with several jumpers jumping the same fire three times. When asked which of his three jumps on Fire 501 was his favorite, **Jason Schroeder** (FBX-08) replied: “The first time’s always the best.”

Dry fuels early in the season contributed to more than one escaped campfire. However embarrassing, it acutely pointed out the need for diligence with campfires, even for gnarly smokejumpers who too often slink away from a smoldering campfire in the night chill, murmuring, “What could possibly go wrong?”

One load jumped a fire burning deep along a lake near Bettles. The crew set up five Mark 3s, with each jumper having his own pump and 1-inch hoselay to himself.



Even after a week of spraying peat banks burning four feet deep, “gladiator-style,” the fire still showed signs of life and was left in monitor status.

One load jumped Fire 666, in which a privately-owned cargo plane had crashed near Ft. Greely, killing all aboard and starting a small fire. The responding jumpers had the somber task of spraying remains to preserve evidence.

There were 541 smokejumper missions flown in Alaska in 2010. Among those, 168 were fire jump missions, 146 were paracargo missions, and 82 trips were made to drop 724 smokejumpers on practice jumps. We flew 25 “dry runs,” or false alarms. That’s nearly 25 “Chicken Dances” – the musical,

obligatory, clucky welcome-home greeting for jumpless jumpers.

Four Alaska Smokejumpers made a total of six fire jumps in Lower 48 in 2010.

Back where the jump action was, 2,485 personnel parachutes were rigged in the Alaska loft. We employed a few retired jumpers and were happy to have them back among us! **Jon Larson** (FBX-89) spent several sleepless weeks working in our paracargo section. **Ron Lund** (FBX-64) and **Ken Coe** (FBX-80) were cargo-chute rigging workhorses. Other Old Salts returned to work in single-resource capacities in the state. They included **Rod Dow** (MYC-68), **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69) and **Mitch Decoteau** (GAC-78). It was surreal seeing so many familiar faces and a pleasure to have them in our halls again.

We welcomed the Lusk Family to Alaska in July. **Jedidiah Lusk** (FBX-10), 9, is battling brain cancer. Filled with high spirits and the love of his family, Jedidiah completed smokejumper rookie training – in a record three days. In doing so Jedidiah fulfilled his wish of becoming a smokejumper, like his parents **Scott Lusk** (FBX-81) and **Cynthia Lusk** (RAC-87).

The Alaska Crew and Alaska Fire Service played a big part in making Jedidiah’s unprecedented training a success. Our loft specialists made him a custom jumpsuit to keep. His training included a jump mission and cargo drop. Jedidiah tossed streamers from his seat at the open door, then gave two jumpers a kick to send them on their way. “Your other left!” Jed quipped on the headset to the

ship's pilots as they made final adjustments.

Several jumpers in the support crew didn't flinch when they missed fire jumps that week, and we were all entertained and moved by the experience. Photos of Jedidiah's Make-A-Wish adventure can be found in my section of the NSA Image Gallery. In October, Jedidiah was feeling well, staying active and being happy.

Congrats to **Tamar Young** (FBX-07) and **Ian Dooley** (FBX-08) for becoming senior parachute riggers. Dooley was also the jump king of the U.S. with 16 fires jumped in Alaska. **Doug Mackey** (FBX-99) became a Designated Parachute Rigger Examiner (DPRE).

Alaska had no cut-away malfunctions and relatively few parachute-rigging related MARS incidents. Alaska Base Manager **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90) said one of the highlights of the year is the fact we had no serious injuries on fire jumps in 2010.

More highlights: a ropeswing set up over the Little Black River, catching salmon with burlap bags 10 miles from the ocean, and building a Huck Finn-style raft during a long demobe. The raft in question, painstakingly crafted by three jumpers, was reportedly stolen and hidden upstream by three other jumpers, forcing the raft-builders to conclude their craft had floated downstream and spurring them to give chase, running downriver for miles.

As the raft-builders gave up and trudged their way upriver, the raft-thieves appeared around a bend, floating peacefully on the well-made craft. "You've started something now," said the builders to the thieves.

We had three ASM (aerial support module) assignments and 17 single-resource prescribed-fire assignments in the Lower 48. We sent four jumpers to the Gulf for oil cleanup in October. McPhetridge spent several weeks in a detail to AFS' south Zone as AFMO. McMillan had two public affairs details to the NPS and the FWS at NIFC to be closer to his family and develop a plan for life after jumping.

The McMillans welcomed son Ian on Sept. 11. We will never forget...his birthday. Also arriving in 2010 - Bill Cramer and wife Sharon welcomed fourth daughter Ella, Randy Foland and Jamie welcomed daughter Isabelle, **Ty Humphrey** (FBX-98) and wife Jennifer welcomed daughter Delia, and **Jeff Stark** (FBX-03) and Laura welcomed son Tanner. **Mike O'Brien** (FBX-98) married Julia.

Ward Scanson (FBX-07) left us for West Yellowstone, taking his square parachute with him. **Tony Pastro** (FBX-77), our saltiest jumper, retires in March. His willingness to share his practical knowledge will be missed. Tony also won the 2009 **Iron Al Seiler** (FBX-85) Award.

It looks like 2011 will be our third season without rookies, except of course for Jedidiah Lusk. We're deeper

than ever now, like the ocean, but different.

2010 will sadly be remembered as the year our friend and fellow Alaska Smokejumper **Dawson Kelsey** (RDD-95) took his life on February 14. Dawson's talent, wit, drive and determination make his suicide difficult to understand. He earned his Master Parachute Riggers license just months before driving into the snow-covered woods outside Weaverville, Calif. and shooting himself beside his pickup. I intend to write more about who Dawson was to so many people in a future issue, and I look forward to input from Dawson's friends. Our sympathy and support for Dawson's mother, Judy, and sister Alice endures.

Boise Base Report

by Quincy Chung (NIFC-03)

Hello from the Boise Smokejumpers. This last winter, spring and summer were pretty mild in not only temperature but also in operations and prescription. During the winter and early spring, we provided jumpers to many users in the Southeast, Montana BLM and Washington State to help write, execute and support prescribed fire operations.

Last spring we picked up four strong new rookies: **Steve Ramaekers** (NIFC-10), **Dereck Bohan** (NIFC-10), **Eero Okkonen** (NIFC-10) and **Jordan Williams** (NIFC-10). Congratulations on making it through.

Also, we assisted in the training of 10 new Region 1 Forest Service Ram Air jumpers (FRAM) and are currently on track with the current FRAM program. Even with the slower-than-normal fire season, the Boise Smokejumper base was able to provide opportunity for R-1 jumpers to get into our operations in Colorado, Idaho, Nevada and Utah. The Boise Smokejumpers had 68 fires jumped with 21 fires pounded for a total of 514 smokejumpers on fires.

Those numbers do not include the high demand for jumpers in the spring and summer in Alaska, which provided great training and operational benefit for the Boise jumpers.

One new addition to our smokejumper operational country was our action in Wyoming. This was mostly due to the recent move of **Paul Hohn** (MYC-00). Paul left the assistant operations manager position and took a job this summer at the Wyoming State Office as the state AFMO in Cheyenne. **Todd Jinkins** (NIFC-98), former assistant loft manager, was hired into Paul's old job. All look forward to the upcoming heckling and harassment of Todd.

During the summer of 2010, we had 22 fire-management details at the local, district, state and national levels.

We also had 26 people on Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Team rosters, with completion of command and general staff positions. The most notable accomplishment was achieved by **Marty Adell** (NIFC-95). Marty completed his Incident Commander Type 2 task book and will be a new IC in 2011. Congratulations, Marty!

The summer of 2010 was one of the slowest jump seasons in the last decade. The Boise jump base had a total of 76 active jumpers with three planes in the fleet. Colorado was the most active place, not including the activity in Alaska. As previously mentioned, the new FRAM program continued with great success and is still on track for 2011 with Region 1 Smokejumpers.

We plan to have a rookie class of 5-10 persons in 2011, with a head count around 81 active jumpers. As for planes, we intend to have three planes, plus the shared Dornier with Alaska, in the fleet with **John Stright** (MYC-83) as our permanent pilot.

We have had a few good smokejumpers move along into new positions this last year. Their work ethic and leadership will truly be missed, but some district, forest, or zone will benefit greatly from our loss.

Until the next report, enjoy, and we will update you later.

Grangeville Base Report

by **Michael Blinn** (RDD-01)

The Grangeville Smokejumpers experienced another slower-than-average fire season in 2010. Couldn't happen three years in a row, right? Wrong!

Central Idaho weather was foggy starting in 2008 and extending through the time of publication. Early refresher spirits were very high, but the downward spiral was in full swing by mid-May. By early June, management had confiscated all belts and shoelaces, edged or pointed items, and sleeping pills from crewmembers. Gacsuckers frittered away their time by dreaming of going to Alaska where fires still occur, pursuing online degrees with the University of Phoenix (no one graduated), and wearing out the bar stools at the Triangle.

By late July, the weather had warmed to tolerable temperatures, and the sun had nearly burned off the ever-present cloud cover. Unfortunately, the increased visibility only made the next approaching system easier to view on the western horizon.

Grangeville hosted R-1 rookie training for the second consecutive year. **Brett Rogers** (MSO-90) and **Chris Hertel** (GAC-91) headed up the training, with sig-

nificant pitch-ins from **Isaac Karuzas** (RDD-01), **Mike Dunn** (GAC-04), **Dan Mooney** (WYS-07) and **Kelly Matthews** (GAC-08). Trainers from the other R-1 Bases included, but were not limited to, **Jesse Meyers** (MSO-03), **Seth Hanson** (MSO-01), **Tony Navarro** (RAC-83) and **Pete Lannan** (WYS-07).

GAC had four rookies finish training this year: **Nick Maki** (Union IHC), **Jeremy Cawn** (Smokey Bear IHC), **Jacob Quigley** (La Grande IHC), and **Brian Agbalog** (Moose Creek RD, NPNF).

There were a few personnel changes in 2010 at GAC. **Joey Forthofer** (RDD-04) and **Jodie Baxter** (GAC-07) were promoted to GS-7 Smokejumper Squadleaders this spring. **Casey Ramsey** (RDD-01) found a more lucrative opportunity to be lanky and nerdish elsewhere this year. **Alessandro Potenziani** (RDD-01) quit again. He's currently doing tree work on Whidbey Island, off the coast of Washington. **Ryan Desautel** (GAC-04) threw in the (bar) towel in September.

Brett Rogers decided to take a detail as a Forest Safety Officer this winter. Apparently baby-proofing his house

Head East, Young Men: Trail Project Expands

The National Smokejumper Association has announced a first-ever Trail Maintenance Project on an Eastern forest. Mark June 12-18, 2010, on your calendars. Attendees will gather on the afternoon of June 12 at the Black Water Falls Lodge for the first meal and a discussion of the project.

The project will involve 1 1/2 miles of tread repair on a segment of the Appalachian Trail System in the Monongahela National Forest and the Canaan State Park near Black Water Falls, which is near Elkins and Davis, W.Va.

The project is for one week this summer, and the crew will stay in state-owned cabins (six men to a cabin, with hot showers and a full kitchen; volunteers will take their meals in the park lodge). Eat your heart out, Kovalicky.

If you are interested in participating, please contact **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) at jumpercj57@hotmail.com or by phone at (785) 643-1865 anytime, Central Time Zone.

Eight jumpers are signed up right now. Join the crew in a beautiful area.

for the expected new arrival has illuminated some holes in our occupational safety guidelines. He used to just hide popcorn in the couch cushions to keep his former child **Kevin Thompson** (GAC-95) occupied. Now there'll be a new baby with the capacity for rational thought to look after.

Kim and Joey Forthofer are expecting their first baby this fall. These are the only known chilluns on the way, but don't count **Nate Hesse** (RDD-01) out. He's usually good for five or six unplanned pregnancies throughout the course of the year.

McCall Base Report

by **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02)

Most folks would sum up the 2010 season for McCall as another slow year, which was particularly tough since it came on the heels of two previous slow seasons. However, while it is tough to argue that point, plenty of things occurred to make the year memorable.

We continued to support Region 8 by sending burn modules to the South throughout the winter and spring months. Many a jumper's wallet has been saved by getting this extra winter work, and the modules continue to pay dividends for prescribed fire experience. Of note, one of our modules was asked to participate in a Washington Office ceremony honoring the last surviving members of the Triple Nickels. Those who participated greatly appreciated the opportunity to visit with those being honored, as well as getting their pictures taken with their boots on the chief's desk!

Spring brought about the typical training season in McCall, shoveling out the units. Once again we had 70 smokejumpers. Ten rookies were hired, with eight successfully completing Ned training. The end of May brought the time to say good-bye (and throw a great party!) to a smokejumper legend. **Eric Brundige** (MYC-77) retired with more than 550 career jumps and left a big void in the operations functional area where he had been the foreman. Eric is missed; however, we still see him around town quite a bit.

Another old timer is looking at hanging things up at McCall as well: **Fred Pavlovic** (MYC-89). If the retirement paperwork goes through, Fred will be leaving a big void here at McCall as well as with our First Aid program. We wish Fred and Eric well and thank them for their efforts.

On the hiring front, **Chris Niccoli** (MYC-95) was hired to fill in behind Eric as our operations foreman, and **Brett Bittenbender** (MYC-88) was hired as our new loft foreman.

As with most bases, we got a jump start to the season by sending 24 boosters to Alaska in May. In all, McCall sent two separate boosters to help our bros in Alaska for a total of 44 jumpers getting to enjoy the Alaska experience. However, while things were cooking in Alaska, McCall was experiencing an epic month of June as far as precipitation was concerned.

The average rainfall for McCall in June is two inches. This year we received just over six inches of rain for the month. Widespread flooding and property damage occurred, as well as many forest and county roads getting washed out. This set the tone for the fire season in central Idaho. We only staffed a total of 13 fires out of McCall. Fire jumps for McCall jumpers totaled 233 nationwide, with many of those occurring in Alaska.

We also boosted North Cascades and Redmond, and set up spike base operations in Stead, Nev., and Ogden, Utah. In addition, we continued to support the Silver City detail by sending five smokejumpers. While our fire jumps were far below average, training jumps were aplenty due to the need to train four new smokejumper pilots.

Also of note, we continued to tear up the local softball league, albeit the "recreational" division. The team went undefeated all the way up until the championship game. That is when our two-day local fire season occurred, and we had to forfeit the game to the city fire department, of all teams. We tried to reschedule, but they had all sorts of excuses and took the trophy and ran. We had a very similar feeling at this year's big flip when, once again, we had to watch GAC take our money and run! Who keeps inviting those guys?

As fall settled into McCall, we had unseasonably warm temperatures that led to a great fall burning season on the Payette. The base contributed many man hours to the efforts and had a great time working with our local resources. We are also continuing to support the Asian Longhorn Beetle extermination efforts by sending tree climbers back to Worcester, Mass.

Lastly, keep an ear out for news on the hiring front as we will be filling vacancies for our assistant loft and assistant operations positions.

Missoula Base Report

by **Court Wallace** (GAC-04)

The summer of 2010 has come to an end and, like many years before, our hopes and predictions didn't exactly work out the way we envisioned. With a winter snow pack ranging from 40 to 60 percent of normal across the region, we thought there can't be three slow fire seasons in a row.

Since this was the 100th anniversary of the fires of 1910, many of us believed/hoped this would be the summer where we broke personal jump records and walked away with overtime exceeding our expectations. As it would turn out, we would not see the big fire season we were hoping for in Region 1, but were able to stay busy fighting fires in other regions, countries and states. We also had the occasional fire up Rock Creek, which thankfully has limited road access. All said and done, we jumped 15 fires out of Missoula, with a handful of miscellaneous single-resource assignments.

Sarah Doehring (MSO-91) and **Jen Martynuik** (MSO-99) headed up Silver City this summer. The crew was made up of six Missoula, two West Yellowstone, three Grangeville, five McCall, and four Boise jumpers. Overall, Silver City jumped eight initial attack fires, which is below average. Even though the fire season in Region 3 was slow, the jumpers were utilized on a variety of different missions.

Most notably was the first time smokejumpers had jumped in the great state of Texas. Five jumpers set up an ICT-3 team for the Big Bend National Park on the Sublett Fire, which was managed for resource benefit. Two weeks later jumpers were back in Texas, this time for a wildfire.

The New-Man-Ram-Air (NMRA) program continued with training nine more Region 1 jumpers (6 MSO, 2 WYS, 1 GAC) moving from the FS-14 to the DC-7 canopy. **Charles Savoia** (MSO-01), **Tory Kendrick** (MSO-00), **Mike Pennacchio** (MSO-00), **Chris Loraas** (MSO-04), **Josh Clint** (MSO-04) and Wallace were the Missoula jumpers who completed the three-week training.

Tory managed to have the first Forest Service cutaway malfunction on the Ram Air system, which came in the form of a tension knot on his sixth training jump. He followed the correct procedures and landed softly on his reserve canopy. The training was intense and thorough, thanks to the BLM trainers who dedicated a lot of time in providing excellent training, as well as integrating new Forest Service trainers. The plan is to train another class of Region 1 NMRA jumpers in 2011.

This summer Missoula saw the retirement of **Wayne Williams**, a.k.a. "W.W." (MSO-77). Wayne retired soon after refresher; his wish granted to retire as a current jumper. He is now working for the Montana DNRC, where he has become known as the "cool" safety guy.

Mike Patten, a.k.a. "the General" (MSO-87), also hung up his jump gear and was encountered by MSO jumpers packing out after jumping a fire above Mike's house in Rock Creek. Congratulations on sticking it out and good luck to no longer having to come to work.

Currently MSO jumpers are performing fuels work around Missoula, starting in on the winter work, head-

ing to the east coast for APHIS climbing, prescribed burning in Region 8 and Region 1, working with Natick engineers on who knows what, hunting, and getting laid off. The rumor is, it is supposed to be an "epic" ski season ... only time will tell.

North Cascades Base Report

by **Scott Wicklund** (NCSB-91)

The North Cascades Smokejumper Base was a beehive of activity in 2010 despite a relatively slow fire season. To start the New Year off-base, manager **John Button** (NCSB-75) retired from a long and admirable smokejumping career. John will be missed.

Daren Belsby (NCSB-86) hit the deck running this winter as the temporary base manager and, in July, was selected for the permanent position. Congratulations, Daren! Along with his various new duties, a large part of Daren's winter was filled with hiring 16 rookie candidates. For a small base, this was a huge influx of new smokejumpers.

Other changes at NCSB being considered are replacing the current administration shack and loft. During the winter and spring NCSB jumpers were involved in multiple projects including prescribed burning details around the nation, the ongoing hunt for the Asian Longhorned Beetle in Massachusetts, a Tussock Moth eradication effort here in the Methow Valley, and an extensive White Bark Pine cone caging and picking project.

Record amounts of June rain dampened the jumpsuits of prospective rookie candidates, but never their spirits. With the help and the tireless efforts of the trainers and support crew, 12 new rookies emerged from the mist, and NCSB started the 2010 fire season with a total of 36 smokejumpers. The dirty dozen (rookies) who made it were a solid bunch. Congratulations to all of you!

Of special note: John Button's lineage lives on in smokejumping in the form of his son, **Patrick Button** (NCSB-10). At the time of John's retirement, Patrick was merely another smokejumper applicant. As of this writing, he has a successful year under his belt and holds this year's jump hog title with 10 fire jumps.

Another interesting side note was a reconfiguration of the trusty CASA jump ship that allowed us to carry 15 smokejumpers on practice jumps and 10 smokejumpers with cargo for fire missions. Speaking of the CASA, our fearless Capt. Kevin McBride returned this year with "rookie" co-pilot Kyle Skidgel, who made another great addition to the staff here at NCSB.

With the NCSB plate full of project work, the Pacific Northwest wet spring hardly put a dent in the workload. Nonetheless, the wait for that first fire jump of the season was a long one for many of the NCSB personnel. Alaska, however, was having none of that and made it clear that the CASA was in high demand. Booster request from Alaska also trickled in, but “rookie training hold” limited available numbers. The day after rookie training ended, the CASA headed north with just two lucky NCSB jumpers. A couple weeks later 12 more NCSB smokejumpers joined the Alaska mega-mix. Thanks, Alaska!

By late July, with no fire jumps on the NCSB board and everybody home from Alaska, things seemed like they might be just starting to get desperate. However, a wet thunderstorm on July 28 left its mark in the form of a small fire in the Cascade foothills that was spotted first from the NCSB saw shack by **Guy McLean** (NCSB-07).

The plane was soon filled with various jumpers and several wide-eyed rooks, along with **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74) leading the charge. NCSB’s official jump season had begun. By the way, Dale Longanecker still reigns as the leader in total jumps as a smokejumper. With mandatory retirement looming at the end of 2011, next year may be everyone’s last chance to jump a fire with him and give him a well-deserved high five.

As if his successful career and jump record isn’t enough, over the last few years Dale has also designed and created an experimental main canopy which is showing promise in current MTDC test drops.

Washington State finally dried out in August and September. Sporadic lightning ignited several fires, and we ended up being busy on and off for several weeks. We also managed to send a few boosts to Redmond and filled a surprise request from Canada to jump fires with our northern brethren at the North Peace Smokejumper Base, where all NCSB boosters ended up “parattacking” fires. In the end, all had a successful smokejumping season. NCSB finished the season with a total of 117 smokejumpers out the door.

NCSB also saw a growth in skills and qualifications this summer with six new senior riggers, three trainee spotters, a variety of temporary appointments, and many fire qualification task books being started and signed off. On a more personal level, congratulations to **J.T. Sawyer** (NCSB-07), **Ryan Taie** (NCSB-00), **Inaki Baraibar** (NCSB-98), and **Matt Desimone** (RAC-97), who all became proud fathers this past year. In addition, **Ryan McCliment** (NCSB-07) tied the matrimonial knot in July.

As winter approaches, project work is back in full swing with prescribed burning, multiple tree-climbing projects, district beautification (i.e., painting), and various other less-glamorous, but no less important, tasks and duties. **Nan Floyd** (RAC-00) is off in Washington,

D.C., for her second trip this year to help out with the Disaster Assistance Support Program. With a La Niña weather pattern setting up for the winter, some of us are looking forward to increased snowfall and a deep snow pack. Others are lining up for prescribed burning in warmer climates.

Wishing you all the best! See you in 2011.

Redding Base Report

by **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03)

Due to procrastination, laziness and general slack-assery, this will be the shortest base report to come out of Redding since Cecil B. Fudgebottom’s “that’s what she said” one-liner in the 1958 edition.

Highlights from the 2010 season are as follows: We had the big reunion in Redding, during which those of us who were lucky enough to miss the first Alaska boost were edified about the history of smokejumping and our relatively leisurely position therein.

We came ever so close to shattering records once again, this time for the slowest season in recorded history. We did break the record for the latest fire jump, which was ... sometime late.

“**Beef Jerry**” **Spence** (RDD-94) still stubbornly refuses to pronounce the letter “l” in almond. It’s not spelled “ammond,” Jerry. **Josh Mathiesen** (RDD-94) had to take several sick days to regroup and heal emotionally after discovering that that is, in fact, what she said.

Dan Hernandez (RDD-85) is up to eight quart-sized canteens of “fine” Folgers coffee a day, and has been spending his evenings working on his future bestseller, entitled “How Long: A Practical Approach to Wondering Out Loud How Many Minutes Are Left in the Work Day.”

The Redding baby factory is in full swing, thanks to **Doug Powell** (RDD-05), **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00), **Rick Rataj** (RDD-00), **Derek Wheeler** (RDD-05) and **John Casey** (RDD-99). Please forgive any overlaps from last year or outright omissions.

The vacant GS-8 Spotter position went to **Rico Gonzales** (RDD-99), the GS-7 Squad Leader went to **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03), and the GS-6 Senior Smokejumper went to **Erin Springer** (RAC-08), who made semi-history by being the first jumper to transfer to Redding since “Welcome Back Kotter” was filming new episodes, if not earlier.

Brian Pontes (RDD-03), **Ken Perry** (FBX 93), pilot John Blumm, Mathiesen, Spence, Casey and Reeves ventured to Bear Valley, Calif., to take part in Tough Mudder Norcal.

Contingents were sent to Region 8 to burn and Mas-

sachusetts to climb trees and slay the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

Pontes continues his battle in the Clay County, Ky., courthouse to gain custody of little Bosphorus Pontes, who looks more like Brian every day, minus a few teeth. We all wish him luck.

Redmond Base Report

by Josh Voshall (Redding '03)

Greetings jumpers, old and new! We here at the Redmond Smokejumper Base hope that everyone had a good season or at least had a semi-productive and safe season.

This year at RAC, the base was filled with the proverbial emotional roller-coaster rides. The jump list stayed stagnant for weeks on end, project work ended because of the lack of funding, and jumpers started up MMA events in the loft to pass up the time. So what was going on this year? I guess the main answer was the lack of fires, with the exception of Alaska early in the season. If you were in Alaska anytime this season, you probably made a lot of money. If you didn't make it up there, you're *probably* in debt to your local bartender!

We sent two boosts of jumpers up to the "Last Frontier" to exploit the old cash cow. Here at the base, we want to thank the bros in Alaska with our deepest gratitude for your hospitality to everyone who made it up there. We also sent boosts to North Cascades three times and one boost to McCall.

Like most lower 48 bases, as far as fires go, nothing was really established until the middle of July. The high desert was hit pretty well as was the south end of the state. Jumps were made on the Fremont/Winema National Forest as well as the Deschutes, Willamette, and Malheur. We had to contend with the engines more than the rappellers this time around due to a national stand down of the rappel program until the middle of July.

Things started to pick up in July and August, but August never had that "Dirty August" feel to it. Most fires had enough precip on them to keep them small and manageable. Needless to say, there were a lot of good deals out there! In all, the Redmond Smokejumpers staffed 36 fires – 54 percent of our 10-year average of 66 fires. Additionally, we had a total of 204 fire jumps, which is only 66 percent of our 10-year average of 309.

An incident worth mentioning was the Cedar Creek Fire, located on the Rogue/Siskiyou National Forest on Aug. 22. If you know the Siskiyou, then you've probably heard about the Biscuit Fire and Oak Flat Fire.

This year's Cedar Creek Fire was initially attacked by two loads of jumpers. Both loads came from Redmond

and consisted of both McCall and Redmond jumpers. The fire was located on the southwest end of the forest and was fairly flat, on top of a ridge, which was fortunate because those parts are usually STEEEEEEEEP! The first load quickly established a Type 4 incident management structure, but due to the location, weather, and aerial resources on the fire, the jumper in charge called for reinforcements and a Type 3 incident commander.

The second load took off from Redmond with Forrest Behm (MYC-00) leading the charge as the IC Type 3 at around 1630. It took roughly an hour and a half to get to the fire and as soon as the second load hit the ground and got all of the gear together, we tied into the first load, came up with a plan and made some pretty good headway by the end of shift. After the second load got to the ground, air attack from the Oak Flat Fire was estimating the fire to be more than 60 acres, so we had to work quickly to establish a good anchor point so we didn't lose it, because the next day was supposed to be even hotter and drier.

The next day, Aug. 23, we had established a well-rounded Type 3 management team because we were going to have hotshot crews, Type 2 crews, and more aerial resources on the fire, as well as fire investigators and the district ranger visiting the fire. Later that day, we had handline and sawline established around the fire with the help of all the crews. So, fast forward to Aug. 24. GPS showed the perimeter of the fire to be 23 acres. It wasn't the 60 or so acres that air attack had estimated, but it was quite an accomplishment by both the McCall and Redmond Smokejumpers, especially on the Siskiyou!

Some notable milestones that came about this season are in no particular order: Tony "TL" Loughton (RDD-83) recorded his 500th – yep, that's right – 500th parachute jump. Tony "I Live on Fried Food" Sleznick (RDD-92) jumped out of a perfectly good airplane for the 350th time. Tony "Terrible Towel" Johnson (RAC-97) jumped number 250. Dirk Stevens (RAC-91) jumped his 400th, and Bill Selby (RAC-91) took the big leap to number 300. Congratulations, as well, to everyone who hit a jump milestone that I didn't mention!

This year, to our large list of 53 jumpers, we added 11 rookies who successfully went through rookie training unscathed or relatively unhurt (well, at least I think they were unhurt)!

We welcomed back Nate Silva (RAC-08). Nate was in nursing school in Oklahoma for the 2009 season. Welcome back, Nate. Nick MacKenzie (NCSB-09) transferred from North Cascades to join the crowd of jumpers here at Redmond this year. Welcome to the family, Nick.

With every jumper we added, it seemed as if we had lost another jumper to another base or another line of oc-

cupation. Mitch "Go Griz" Kearns (GAC-89) returned to Missoula as training foreman. It was sad to see Mitch leave because he had done so much for the base as far as keeping people employed during the fall and spring with numerous projects in the Southeast. Thanks, Mitch, for everything you did here at Redmond!

Bruce Card (MSO-06) took off to greener pastures in Florence, Ore., to continue to be an electrician. Good luck, Bruce, in your endeavors! Erin "Captain Insanity" Springer (RAC-08) transferred to Redding at the end of the season. Have fun in Redding, Erin. **Rob Rosetti** (RAC-01) became a permanent fixture in the Air Attack world. Flying in circles seemed to be really fun for Rob this year!

We did have a few changes occur during the year as far as overhead and spotter movement are concerned. Tony Johnson was detailed into our operations foreman position with **Gary Atteberry** (RAC-97) as his assistant. Both Tony and Gary did a great job in operations this year. Thanks, guys!

Mark Gibbons (RAC-87) was detailed as our training foreman with Tony Loughton as his assistant. **Ryan Koch** (RAC-01) and **Brandon Coville** (RAC-00) were our newest spotters in training. They both did a really good job in putting jumpers on the ground.

Heidi "Mrs. Dez" Bunkers (RAC-04) and **Matt Desimone** (RAC-97) welcomed a beautiful baby girl this year, adding to the list of future smokejumpers we might see here at Redmond. **Dave Keller** (RAC-04) was in Reno, Nev., for the year going to paramedic school. Good luck, Dave.

Well, I guess I've rambled on enough. To those who've been laid off, football season is upon us, so begins the armchair quarterback phase of our life. To those still working, I hope you're having fun completing overdue loft projects and wishing you didn't have to look at a computer screen all day doing miscellaneous Aglearn classes.

From ALL 53 jumpers representing the Redmond Smokejumpers, have a safe and wonderful off-season, and see you on the big one!

West Yellowstone Base Report

by **Ernie Walker** (RDD-01)

West had another quiet year with a little action abroad. We ended the summer with six fire jumps. **Brian Wilson** (WYS-98) and **Nick Stanzak** (WYS-00) trained on the Ram Airs. We had three detailer rookies: **Nathan Basford**, **Garrett Kirpach** and **Rob Spence**. Rookies scored one to three jumps, not bad for a slow one.

West had jumpers working all over the West: Alaska, British Columbia, California, Mexico, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. This fall we have climbers in Massachusetts and prescribed burning in the West area and R8.

We would like to congratulate our new Base Manager **Jon Ueland** (MSO-80). In other new promotions, we have Operations Foreman **Pete Lannan** (WYS-07), Assistant Operations Foreman **Brian Wilson**, Assistant Training Foreman **Cindy Champion** (MSO-99), Spotter **Cole Parker** (MSO-92), Squadleaders **Jason Gibb** (GAC-04), **Joe Rock** (WYS-05) and **Robert Smith** (MSO-07). Congrats!

West would like to welcome **Knute Olsen** (MSO-00) as assistant loft foreman and **Ward Scanson** (FBX-07) as a GS-6 13/13 transfer.

We got another boost to the Junior Smokejumper program. The new additions for 2010 are **Alexander Ames** – son of **Kevin Ames** (WYS-05) – **Tully Gibb** and **Mia Smith**. Currently our office manager, **Magen Crowley**, is working on a new package due in January 2011. 🦅

The Early Days Of The Southern Oregon Skydivers

by **Dick Burns** (Fairbanks '64)

Dick Burns sent the following letter with his NSA Life Membership check. It is an interesting recounting of how he got interested in smokejumping, and he mentions some very familiar names. (Ed.)

Okay – count me in. Been pondering on this since your "promotional letter" came, back in February. It worked! But, then, so has the difference you have made in the growth of the NSA

organization as editor of *Smokejumper* magazine. Don't actually recall what year I did join the NSA membership, but have seen the "magazine" grow from a newsletter of a few pages (Xeroxed and stapled) to the fine-quality magazine it is today!

Am sure most would agree that as the magazine grew and improved, so did the NSA grow and mature into so much more than just a collection of former smokejumpers getting together for an occasional reunion.

In 1961, I became acquainted with a rather informal group of local guys, amusing themselves and all curious bystanders by jumping out of airplanes (with parachutes, of course). This was Southern Oregon, Rogue Valley, Medford/Ashland. I had grown up in Ashland, graduated from high school in 1956, had a three-year hitch in the Navy, and returned to attend (at that time) Southern Oregon College.

Life was good: had a job, going to school, and living at home again. Kinda dull after three years in the service, so ... joined up with the "Southern Oregon Skydivers." Some of that loose group of "informal" members and participants were smokejumpers, most of them from Cave Junction and Redding.

Mort Gossett was club president (main guy) when I joined in June 1961 and was still the main guy in '66. Mort was never a smokejumper, but his brother, **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57), was a principal member all along, too.

Both Mort and Lee were pilots. Mort must have gotten tired of soliciting "willing pilots" and airplane owners to fly skydivers on weekends, so he and Lee bought a used Cessna 172. They had it modified with a special door on the right side to accommodate jumpers.

Our weekend sport-jumping "schedule" suddenly became a lot more "reliable." Seems like the smoke-jumper guys had to keep pretty quiet about participating in sport parachuting, though; "smokejumper headquarters" must have frowned on that activity at the time.

Some of the others who'd show up to make a few sport jumps were **Bill Bowles** (RDD-57), **Mick Swift** (CJ-56), **Charley Engstrom** (MSO-55) and **Tommy Smith** (CJ-61).

Dick Zediker (CJ-64) was already a member when I joined; he and I became pretty good friends. We both got hired on at the Star Ranger Station near the Applegate River in March 1963. Both of us wound up on the Hotshot crew that summer, and we both got picked for smokejumping in '64.

We had shared a couple of classes at SOC and had gotten acquainted with **Ed Weissenback** (RAC-64)

there, got him interested in sport jumping, and I'm pretty sure it was Dick who encouraged Ed to put in an application for smokejumping. We both (and I'm sure Ed did, too) used Lee Gossett as a reference on our applications. Lee must have put in a "good word" because we both got hired, and so did Ed. I'm pretty sure they both trained on the same crew at Cave Junction.

When you get with a bunch of 60-, 70- to 80-year-old former smokejumpers, you know you are among friends. You don't find much to disagree on, and you find you can still get a lot of "schtuff" done!

I had always been eager to go to Alaska. I got my wish! Thanks, Lee!

I've always felt a little guilty over not being able to go back for a few more seasons. It was the best, most fun, most satisfying job I've ever had. And, at that time anyway (1964), smokejumping in Alaska – compared to the Lower 48 – was a "piece of cake." The chances of landing in a tree were pretty remote. Even if you did, you had a 50-foot letdown rope (the standard for Cave Junction was 200 feet), and you never had to pack out your gear (where would you go?).

I did get 10 fire jumps that year and would have liked to have gone back for a few more seasons; "circumstances" come up, however, and your fantasy has to change.

Forty-two years later (2006), I found a way to ease my conscience a little by signing up with the NSA Trail Maintenance Program. Have been coming back ever since and been getting a pretty good "workout" each year, too.

Being among the "elder demographic" now and having been attracted to similar interests and "activity" during our, ah, youth, we have quite a few "similar" values, attitudes, ethics, and the phenomenon of having grown up in a much different "social culture" than we see "around" today!

When you get with a bunch of 60-, 70- to 80-year-old former smokejumpers, you know you are among friends. You don't find much to disagree on, and you find you can still get a lot of "schtuff" done! So, here is a "contribution" to a very worthy cause, although, hey, I will accept the "free" lifetime subscription to *Smokejumper* magazine. 🐿