

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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SMOKEJUMPER



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

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Associate Editor: *Ed Booth*

Editing: *K. G. Sheley*

Photos: *Johnny Kirkley*

Illustrators: *Dan Veenendaal*, and *Eric Rajala*

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Message from the President



by John Twiss
(Redmond '67)
PRESIDENT

I WAS ASKED recently: "What do you guys and gals do at the National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors meetings besides drink beer?"

Good question. I remember the evening beer drinking quite well; it is always the best part – but I had to think about the actual meetings.

Seriously – the board meets twice a year, spring and fall, for a day and a half. We usually have about 15 board members in attendance who come ready to report out from assignments taken on at the previous meeting.

The meetings usually begin with a presentation by Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management fire leadership and smokejumper base managers. We try to stay current and learn of the emerging issues facing today's jumpers. We ask where and how we can help.

The next subjects usually revolve around money and membership. How many members do we have and how are our finances? Who are the new Life Members? You don't have much of an

organization without members and a solid base of funding.

That discussion usually leads to reminding ourselves of our mission: "The NSA, through a cadre of volunteers and partnerships, is dedicated to preserving the history and lore of smokejumping, maintaining and restoring our nation's forest and grassland resources, being an advocate – where appropriate – for the smokejumper program, and responding to special needs of smokejumpers, pilots and their families." We also consider why we exist, as well as better ways of raising membership and funds.

Membership is about 1,700 jumpers, pilots and associates – with 264 Life Members – and our net worth is close to \$500,000. Not bad for a bunch of nitwits who jump out of airplanes!

We listen to presentations on our smokejumper history program, smokejumper database, Smokejumper magazine, expanding trails and facility program, website development and NSA merchandise program.

Each of these presentations and discussions is led by very capable volunteer board members I am so thankful to have. They assume the responsibility for the program, don't whimper and do a great job.

Want a busy job? Try being the NSA treasurer, magazine editor, or membership coordinator. Charlie Brown, Chuck Sheley and John McDaniel, you are saints. Well, maybe that's going too far.

Perhaps my favorite part of the meeting – next to the social we

have on Friday night to which we invite every smokejumper and pilot within 100 miles of our board meeting site – is the discussion on the philanthropic part of our mission. What smokejumper, pilot or family member needs some help? Can we do more with our Scholarship and Good Samaritan

programs? Whom do we need to recognize for his or her smokejumper or NSA leadership?

We conclude each meeting on Saturday afternoon with an endorsement of new board members, a good-bye and thanks to vacating board members and a critique of the meeting. You

can read the board minutes (and get the future meeting dates and locations) on the NSA website.

Interested in rolling up your sleeves and becoming an NSA board member? Give any of us a call. We also welcome your visit and participation at any board meeting. †

The Resurrection of Aunt Clarey's Remedy

by Major L. Boddicker (Missoula '63)

NSA Members—Save This Information

Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

Smokejumper magazine

Articles, obits, change of address

Chuck Sheley 530-893-0436
 cnkgshley@earthlink.net
 10 Judy Ln.
 Chico, CA 95926

Membership

John McDaniel 785-668-2093
 jumpercj57@hotmail.com
 P.O. Box 105
 Falun, KS 67442-0105

Historical items

Photos, letters, documents

Larry Longley 360-654-1720
 ldlongley@gmail.com
 16430 Marine Dr.
 Stanwood, WA 98292

All else

NSA President
 John Twiss 605-673-4117
 johntwiss1@live.com
 160 Clay Street
 Custer, SD 57730-1036

Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage..... ANC	Grangeville GAC	ReddingRDD
Boise..... NIFC	Idaho City IDC	Redmond.....RAC
Cave Junction CJ	La Grande..... LGD	West Yellowstone WYS
Fairbanks FBX	McCall.....MYC	Whitehorse Yukon YXY
Fort St. John YXJ	MissoulaMSO	Winthrop..... NCSB

The 1960s was a decade famous for hippies, the Beatles, Woodstock, Haight-Ashbury, and general chaos and rebellion.

Most 1960s jumpers were too busy doing responsible things to be hooked up with any of those phenomena. We were more into Maggie's Bend, the Rex Rooms, the Heidlehaus, the Ox, Talon's, the Gold Strike Saloon, and the Montana Club – establishments for gentlemen. Maggie's Bend was USFS-approved, proven by the fact that Forest Service trucks were parked there on Friday afternoons in 1962 and 1963.

To give you an idea of the intelligence and quality of the entertainment at Maggie's, LeAnn had a master's degree in English literature – so I was told.

It was a time of transition in smokejumping. Light down bags replaced paper sleeping bags. Frozen-fresh meals that we cooked in boiling cans of water replaced Forest Service canned rations. Those meals were better than what some of us ate at home. The D-bag parachutes, a great relief, replaced the standard deployment parachutes. Small Homelite chainsaws replaced misery whips. Jumping was so much more enjoyable in 1968 than it was in 1963.

The average 1960s jumper, before 1965, graduated in 1960-62. In 1966 *Time* magazine named the 25-and-under generation the "Man of the Year" because, as a group, we were mature, squared-away guys who set up goals and went for them in socially acceptable ways. Well, I won't argue with that. I'm not sure I set up goals. I'm not sure I knew what a goal was other than a football score.

The average post-1965 jumpers were more in tune with mischievous instigators who were amazing at coming up with off-the-cuff, outrageously funny stunts. Hell-raisers might be putting their behavior in a more realistic context.

When I terminated in late August 1964 at Grang-

eville, my general thoughts of my esteemed compadres were they were mature and squared-away guys, full of fun and energy, but responsible and sensible.

When I returned to Missoula in 1968 and entered the jump list, hit the Missoula bars and nightlife, all I remember thinking was: Where the hell did these guys come from?

My 1963 trainee buddies had moved up into squad leader positions or were gone. There I was in the midst of this new generation of jumpers, the old man at age 26 and still a private. What did I do? When in Missoula, do what the Missoula jumpers do? No way!

Fortunately, 1968 was a very busy summer, so I did not spend much time in Missoula getting into trouble.

Being married with three little kids, Jan and I rented a small house just north of Lolo, Mont. Since I was married, I was not carousing in Missoula during my nighttime hours and was available by phone most of the time. Earl Cooley (MSO-40) knew that and took great pride in calling me at the most inopportune times to announce I was needed immediately to load up for a ground-pounder fire somewhere.

When I straggled into the loft at 5 a.m., he would be there with a big grin on his face, as if to say, "Oh, sorry – did I interrupt something?" Well, the overtime was good in 1968.

The crew would grumble and get our gear ready, then sit around the loft and wait for two hours before we

loaded into the DC-3 and headed for some gawdawful place and fire. It was hot, which was a good thing because they left the door open in the DC-3 so the rabble-rousing guys could barf out the door. They regularly bombed Utah, Nevada, and Idaho on our way to Arizona, California and Oregon, which was much better than dropping that load into their helmets.

Of course, not all late 1960s Missoula Jumpers were hell-raisers, but they are easier to remember than the quiet guys who read the Bible and said the Rosary as we prepared to fight hell's fires.

We had lots of nicknames for each other – which may or may not have had meaning – like the Kibbie Let-Down Kid, Digger, Butch, Great Gray Whistling Squirrel, and Denny Big Log. The Bear and Bo-Dick-Her were the most-used nicknames for me.

All jumpers remember how legends start among jumpers. Usually some innocent problem arises and someone brilliantly comes out of the ranks and solves it. The jumper thereafter has been remembered for his ingenuity.

There were brilliant moments that are associated with jumpers, which allow me to instantly remember their names during these years of my fading memories.

This brings me to my story. This story is rotten, totally improper, and I would not repeat it except that it portrays real MSO jumper history as it was, over 40 years ago. I am sure nobody else will tell it because it

Elections for NSA Board of Directors Chuck Sheley, Election Committee Chair

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2012.

Even though you would be obligated to two meetings a year, it is important to remember that you can be a valuable working BOD member regardless of where you live. In the day of email, a functioning board can work with its members spread across the U.S. If you have ideas and are willing to roll up your sleeves, please consider joining the NSA work force.

Election timeline and procedures:

1. Jan.-Feb. 15, 2011, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 15.
2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
4. Ballots must be received by May 20.
5. New board members to take office July 1, election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

Please call, write or email for your filing papers. My contact information is on page three of this issue. The time to act is *now!*



Boddicker's inspiration for the trombone pump enema: Clara (Davis) Noeller, circa 1947, when she was applying her remedy for "worms and fidgeting" to great nephews and nieces. (Courtesy M. Boddicker)

takes someone with credentials like mine to remember that this had some sliver of significance.

It started as a personal experience in my youth. There was a crazy old great-aunt in my family by the name of Clara (Davis) Noeller (a.k.a. Aunt Clarey). She had homesteaded with my great-uncle at Powell, S.D., in 1908 on a farm that bordered the wagon road between the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Indians passed there frequently and would stop and beg for food and water for their horses. Aunt Clarey said she would feed them when she had food and would chase them out of her house with a broom when she didn't. This was 18 years after the first Wounded Knee Massacre. The Sioux called her "the crazy woman with a broom," which she knew in the Lakota language and was proud of the name.

We kids hated to see her come. She got some weird, damned pleasure out of torturing us. As all kids were then, we would run, jump, scream, and fidget, which to her indicated we had worms. And – you guessed it – her remedy for that was Ivory soap in very warm water squirted up our small butts with a rubber tube attached to a hot water bottle. That sure as hell got the worms out. You can understand why Aunt Clarey was not our favorite person.

Now Boddicker, what the hell does that have to do with smokejumping? I'm getting to it; just hold on.

My very first fire after new-man training in 1963 was in Yellowstone Park, a large pounder fire. We fought it valiantly, as usual, under very nasty conditions.

It was very cold at night, and we were bivouacked in a cattail swamp. During the day it was very hot, and we cut line in a type of grass that was like cutting high-quality carpet (very dense). Our hands were solid, bleeding blisters after the first six hours. We chopped pieces out of the line with the ax head of the Pulaski. It was miserable with a capital M.

On the fire were several esteemed overhead (EOs). I liked all of them. One of them was growing grumpy and standoffish. The longer we spent on the fire, the grumpier he got, and he would go off by himself and set up his camp to avoid us.

One night, a bunch of us were sitting around the cook fire, telling stories, and someone asked what was wrong with esteemed overhead No. 1. The discussion dropped to a whisper because nobody wanted to have EO hear our conversation. He was a tough SOB.

After 47 years, I don't exactly remember the conversation, but it went something like this:

"He gets plugged up on fires; can't s---; the longer the fire, the more plugged he gets and the grumpier he gets," older Jumper No. 1 said.

“What do you mean, he can’t s—?” exclaimed Jumper No. 3.

“How bad is it?” Jumper No. 2 asked.

“Well, I have been there and it ain’t funny. You would use a corkscrew, if you had one, to fish the damned turd out,” said Jumper No. 1.

“Why does he get plugged up? These Forest Service rations sure keep me regular,” remarked Jumper No. 3.

“Well, I suppose he’s not drinking enough water, plus nerves – just getting your system thrown out of whack will do it,” I said. At the time I was taking parasitology and wildlife management in college and was educated in that sort of stuff: scatology – the study of poop.

“Well, I feel sorry for him. He really turns into a bear after four or five days being constipated,” said Jumper No. 1. “Wish there was something we could do for him.”

“I just happen to know how to help him,” I stated flatly, recalling my least-favorite great-aunt Clarey’s child-abuse efforts toward my small bottom.

“Oh, bulls—,” said Jumper No. 3.

“Let me tell you how; then you tell me if we should suggest it to EO. I don’t have a clue how he would take it. I sure don’t want to piss him off!” I exclaimed in a whisper.

“Shoot, man. What can it hurt?” said Jumper No. 2.

“Well, we heat up a couple of pints of water and chip up a bar of fire-pack soap in it, and stir it well. Then we pour it into our trombone piss pump. He bares his butt, bends over, someone squirts a couple tablespoons of the soapy water up his butt. I guarantee he’ll s— like a Christmas goose. What do you think?” I described. I wondered what Mr. Trombone would think about using his piss pump that way.

“For Christ’s sake, who would do it?” Jumper No. 2 asked.

“Whoever knows EO best. That’s not me,” I said.

“Well, bulls—. You know how to do it. You do it!” exclaimed Jumper No. 3.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked. “Let’s vote – all in favor of suggesting this to EO, give me a signal.” I think I got five instant bird signs, which meant “yes.”

“Okay, now – who is going to ask him?” I asked. “Not me.”

“Well, how about we very diplomatically bring up the topic in conversation from here, loud enough EO can hear us? You know – talk about being plugged up and we all have the problem now and again, and what we do about it. You know, like we don’t know he’s having the problem. If he wants us to do it, he’ll come over and ask for help and nobody gets in trouble. We’ll be sort of smokejumper heroes,” said Jumper No. 1.

Jumper No. 1 was a teacher, older – a real diplomat.

So, that is exactly what we did, very diplomatically



The trombone fire pump and ingredients for the remedy for fire fighter’s constipation, circa 1963. (Courtesy M. Boddicker)

and seriously without four-letter words: repeated Aunt Clarey’s recipe for worms and constipation just loud enough EO could hear.

Very shortly EO sauntered over to the campfire with as much dignity as one can have, trying to walk around carrying a five-day log.

“Hey, guys – I overheard your discussion about having a cure for being plugged up,” EO said quietly. “I am really plugged up and I would like to try your remedy. It sounds like it should work,” he said.

“I’ll get the water and soap ready and get the pump set up,” I offered. “Jumper No. 1 would probably be the best for applying the soapy water.”

“Yeah, I’ll do it if that is okay with you,” Jumper No. 1 said to EO.

“Just take it easy. If I remember right it only takes a couple of tablespoons full,” I instructed.

So, on a gorgeous and cold starry night, beside a clear and rushing Yellowstone Park stream, Aunt Clarey’s medical procedure was applied with great dignity and skill to a full moon, so to speak.

It took just a few minutes after injection when the desired effect was obtained, resulting in a smiling EO and a feeling of relief for all of us. Who knew when it would be our turn?

As I wrote this story, I wondered if I had any evidence of the story in my notes or letters to my wife shortly after it happened. No luck. I remember the story was widely circulated among MSO jumpers at the time.

In a letter to my wife from Alaska in 1969, I mentioned that a jumper on an Alaskan fire had been seriously plugged up. He had given himself an enema with

a piss pump, which was a widely admired feat that was duly recorded in the jumper oral history. I wonder where he got the idea.

Missoula smokejumpers of the 60s were exceptionally multi-skilled. We learned lot of lessons we have carried through life.

Now I'm sure you jumpers have two questions:

Is this a true story? Come on guys, could Boddicker dream up something like this out of the blue? It is true!

Who was the esteemed overhead? I will take that secret to my grave. Besides, I only think I remember who it was; I'm not sure. He was a tough SOB. I can't remember any of the other jumpers who were there. If you were there in 1963 on the Yellowstone pounder fire, send me an e-mail or letter. ☛

Major Boddicker can be reached at PO Box 999, LaPorte, CO 80535 or critrcalln@larinet.net.

Guy Believed Religion Needed To Fit A Person's Cultural Understanding

by Thad Wilson

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Soon after I graduated and became a registered nurse, I volunteered to work at La Buena Fe clinic in Honduras. In a remote part of a poor Central American country, a few nurses handled all the health care needs of 5,000 people.

I found myself conducting minor surgery, delivering babies, diagnosing and prescribing—none of which was covered in my basic nursing education. To say that my faith was tested on a daily basis would be an understatement.

While there I met the most amazing man I have ever known. His name was Edward "Ed" Guy (MYC-60), and he lived life on the edge – first as a smoke-jumper in McCall during 1960-65 and again in 1969, and then as a missionary and activist in Latin America. To my knowledge he never owned anything besides his Bible. We would give him new boots and clothes, which he promptly gave to the poor.

We saw Ed only about once a month because he spent most of his time walking from town to town, sharing the good word. When he did stop by, the scenario was often the same. He would ask for some medicine, usually for an ill friend in the mountains who couldn't walk to the clinic. Then he would eat a meal large enough for an army.

We would then sit for hours discussing the intersection between religion and sociopolitical issues. Ed taught me that the two cannot be separated.

"Preaching salvation to a people suffering under an

oppressive regime is counterproductive to the message of Jesus," he would say. While I readily agreed with this philosophy, I was challenged by his take on religion. I grew up believing that religion was something into which someone fit. Ed believed that religion had to fit into a person's cultural understanding to be relevant.

I was, at times, shocked by the way he conducted church services or responded to the poor mountain people of Honduras. At the same time, I was awed by the way these people responded to a faith that was within their understanding and cultural beliefs. Ed taught me that God isn't a middle-class white American, but a being that understands and meets peoples of all cultures within their cultural world.

Though he passed away in 2000, he continues to influence me to this day.

Thad Wilson is one of 13 contributors writing the Faith Walk column. Write him at faith@kcstar.com. Thad is looking for more stories about Ed Guy.

*Off the List, "Smokejumper", January 2002:
Edward E. Guy (McCall '60)*

Just received a note from John Guy who informed us that his son, Edward, passed away on September 21, 2001, from a heart attack while living in Guatemala. Mr. Guy said that he was glad that Ed was able to attend the reunion in Redding, where he was able to visit with many old friends from McCall, and that his time at McCall was one of the happiest times of his life.



BLAST FROM THE PAST



Historical Article Details Untimely Death Of Smokejumper- Trained Parachuting Doctor

by **Jack Demmons** (Missoula '50)

IN THE MISSOULA paper dated October 27, 1942, there was this headline: "Dr. Leo Martin Killed by Crash of Trainer Plane!"

The story read: "Captain Leo P. Martin, 39, of Missoula, Mont., and his pilot instructor, were killed Monday night in the crash of a commercial trainer plane near Walla Walla, Washington.

"Striking a power line, the flying school plane crashed in flames, witnesses said.



"Captain Martin was head flight surgeon at the Walla Walla Army Air Force Base.

"His wife, the former Bernice Hagens of Missoula, and her parents, witnessed the accident that took Dr. Martin's life.

"Dr. Martin became nationally prominent when he took parachute training under the direction of Missoula smokejumpers in 1940. His training was soon put to practical purposes when he flew to remote regions to give assistance to injured persons.

"National medical journals credit Dr. Martin with being the first surgeon in the United States to include parachute training as part of his training, and he was the subject of articles in a number of magazines on the basis of this unusual accomplishment.

"He was a native of Coram, Montana, where he attended school before going to Gonzaga in Spokane for his pre-medical work. He graduated from Creighton University in Omaha 15 years ago.

"He later was involved in a medical practice in Chicago. Among several locations in the west where he worked as a doctor was Philipsburg, Montana, prior to setting up his practice in Missoula. He will be deeply missed." †

Dave Russell: The Man Up Front

by **Mike Marcuson** (North Cascades '64)

During 37 years of flying and dropping almost 9,400 smokejumpers and megatons of para-cargo, accumulating more than 12,505 flying hours in various type of aircraft in not so ideal flying conditions, and maintaining over 52 years of marriage, the above numbers are all big, and Dave Russell has earned them.

Hands up all personnel employed with the USFS/BLM between 1967 and 2004. If you jumped from an airplane, received air cargo, talked to the lead plane on retardant drops, flew to or from a project fire or, as a government employee, you were flown to or from a

government function, Dave could have been the man up front, left seat.

There should be lots of hands in the air. As many years as Dave flew us folks, there must be hundreds of stories about his exploits. Here are a few of mine from my Forest Service career.

Those of us who are older folks might well remember when back in the 1960s, at Winthrop, there was a long, dark-haired fella (how come he had long hair when the rest of us had 'standards?') who would run, do push-ups, pull-ups, or some other of those gut-ripping, bone-breaking exercises we smokejumpers were doing.

Remember that same dark-haired fella running towards the airplane and not the hangar when the siren went off for a fire call? Dave was always as gung-ho as we smokejumpers to get into the air and reach that fire. Well, after almost 37 years of flying in the mountains, dropping smokejumpers and their cargo, coast to coast, north to south – including Alaska – and flying so many different types of “jump ships,” that dark-haired fella is now a silver-haired fella (yes, he still has his hair).

We smokejumpers could rely on Dave to get us out there and get our cargo on the ground so our part of the job could start. Dave was exceptional at seeing the same jump spot as the spotters, reading the wind and then lining up the aircraft for the drop, and maybe most importantly, hitting the spot on cargo drops. He never had to buy much beer for a bad drop.

Dave was always ready to add his input to a new project or an evaluation of new jump aircraft. During the off-season Dave learned to sew and joined us year-rounders at the sewing machines.

We would move the loft equipment to the cook shack, mainly because it had heat, and convert the mess hall into a sew shack for all the repair and building of equipment. Dave took to this project quickly, and in no time, he'd upholstered the interior of the R-6 personnel aircraft. He also worked on developing the “square” cargo chutes and long-line deployment systems.

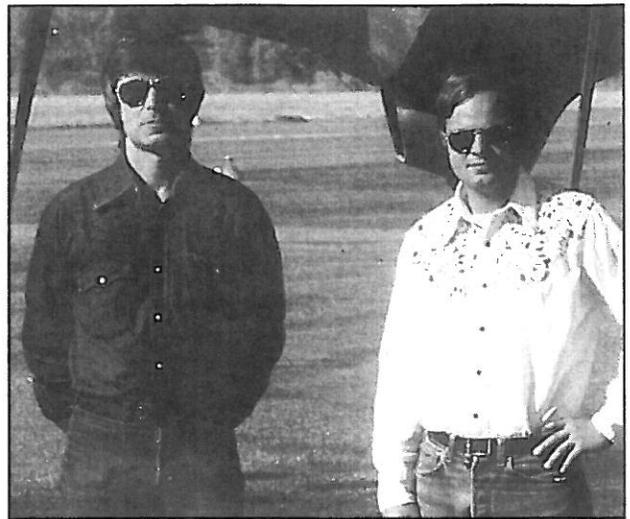
Dave started his career in 1967 at Winthrop as co-pilot to Ken Cavin on the DC-3 (Ken, by the way, is retired and living in Redmond after his own illustrious flying career). Dave was hired as summer pilot in 1969 and flew R-6 Beech 18s.

We old guys still turn our heads to the sky when we hear that twin-engine Pratt & Whitney sound ... there is no echoing sound like it. On the ground, we knew when we heard that aircraft sound that good things were coming our way – paracargo, or more help.

I flew a lot with Dave during my career (1964-76) as a jumper, squad leader and training foreman. We had some heart-thumping times dropping jumpers and cargo.

In 1969, I was a squadleader trainee, just back from the military. During a small fire bust, **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40), also known as “Pappy,” asked Dave and me to take a load of paracargo up Eight Mile Creek and drop it to a fire ground crew. I was pretty excited.

The instructors, namely, **Terry McCabe** (NCSB-58), **Dick Wildman** (NCSB-61), **Bill Moody** (NCSB-57), **Keith Fitzjarrald** (NCSB-63), **Don Fitzjarrald** (NCSB-62), weren't there to show me “how to”; this time was my first “go-it-alone.” Dave and I loaded up the Twin Beech with water, food, tools and proceeded to fly up to Eight Mile Creek. When we located the fire on a ridge top, we did some figure eights, and dropped that paracargo



Dave Russell (L) with co-pilot summer 1978 at NCSB (Courtesy Larry Longley)

right on the ridge.

As we flew back to NCSB, the fire boss called on the radio and said: “Jumper ship, that was a good drop” – we thought so too – “but it was the wrong fire! We did not request any cargo.” WHOOPS!

As it turned out, there was another fire in the same drainage, but we dropped on the first one we saw. So the ground crew delivered the paracargo back to the base, and Dave and I flew it back up Eight Mile Creek. That time, we dropped it on the right fire.

We got to talking afterward and agreed that we actually had thought it strange that they would want a paracargo drop on that first fire, as there were plenty of roads around there. Pappy never said much about it afterward, but there's no doubt what he was thinking about us: “ROOKIES!”

Of course I have always blamed Dave for that mistake – just as he has always blamed me – but needless to say, it was a good lesson learned. Remember, in those years we did our locating using the township, range and section method – which wasn't the easiest to do at times – or we used geographical locations, as with Eight Mile Creek ... right, spotters?

Another time, Dave and I were taking the Twin Beech and four Redding Retreads – remember the retread program? – guys from the districts around Redding who would report for spring jump training, make the practice jumps, and go back to the districts until needed. We did that with a few fellas near NCSB.

Years later, looking back on those times, I have to admire those guys. They would be called to report for jump duty, having only done practice jumps in the spring, and then be sent out to various jump bases to end up jumping into some really treacherous situations. By that, you all know what I mean: high winds, rough

and rocky terrain, bad fire conditions – and raw nerves.

This particular fire trip for Dave and me was up Lost River, and thinking back on it, I am really not sure why we jumped in some of those places, but we did. This small fire was up the side of the canyon in a small, level clearing, and the smoke was going straight up.

Dave and I and the jumpers all saw the spot, and I explained: “There is no drift, no wind; it will be an easy jump; open up and spiral to the spot and call us when you’re down.” But all they could focus on was the terrain, rocks and cliffs.

Dave made the final turn. There were two jumpers ready and over the spot, and I turned and slapped one on the shoulder ... but he turned to me instead, wide-eyed, and asked, “*Now?* You want me to go *now?*” It was too late.

“No, no, not now,” I said. “We’re way past the spot,” and I put the strap back on the door. Dave turned and looked back, knowing we were far past the exit point.

“What’s going on?” he asked. So Dave and I had a quick conversation, and then I talked to the jumpers and we lined up to do it again. Success this time; both jumpers jumped out and landed exactly where we all wanted them.

Dave became a full-time USFS pilot in 1970, stationed out of NCSB until the end of 1979, flying the DC-3 and/or Beech 99. I was detailed to R-8 in the spring of 1972 with Mick Swift (CJ-56) and the Cave Junction crew – I’m not sure how I got in that group as the only outsider in the detail – but Chris Hanes, R-8 head pilot, brought the Beech 99 to Tri-Cities, Va., as a potential jumpship; you know, get there faster, more men on the ground!

We proceeded to put in a static cable and did some jumps. “Fast” is right; that thing could cover the ground. I said it was so fast it burned a hole in the air. When that R-8 Beech 99 came to R-6, Dave was the pilot selected to “learn” that aircraft and evaluate it for a jumper aircraft in the mountains of the west. He flew to every jump base in R-6, and all jump personnel on those bases jumped the Beech 99. Dave was happy he was flying a great aircraft, and we were happy to be getting jumps.

After R-6 evaluation completion, he flew the 99 to Missoula to deliver his report to MEDC, which was for the final approval of the Beech 99.

A lot of us remember using the Beech 99s for the next several years in R-6 and R-4. I remember because it was so fast it actually scared some jumpers who were used to the Beech 18. The old Beech 18 would just roll with the gusts – but that Beech 99 aircraft really bounced around in winds.

From 1980 through 1983, Dave transferred from NCSB to Redmond, flying the Twin Otter for four years.

After Redmond, Dave went into R-4 McCall from 1984 to 1992, now dropping jumpers and cargo with the Beech 99, DC-3, Turbine DC-3, Twin Otter, Kingaire 90, and Aero-Commander, plus flying the Beech Baron as lead plane for tankers on retardant drops.

While based at McCall, Dave retired in March 1992 after 24 years with the USFS where he had earned the title of Assistant to the Deputy Regional Air Officer. There must be numerous Dave Russell stories from jumpers and pilots working in R-6 and R-4.

Dave’s smokejumper dropping career did not stop after retiring, however. He became a contract smokejumper pilot with the USFS/BLM during the summers of 1992 to 2006, after which Dave closed his log books, took off his sunglasses and started real retirement.

Here is where and what he flew as a contract pilot after USFS retirement, until finally closing his log books. Dave’s log books are very concise, and every aspect has been noted: where, who, what, when – all of that information. If ever you ask for some special information, just give him time; he will find it and more.

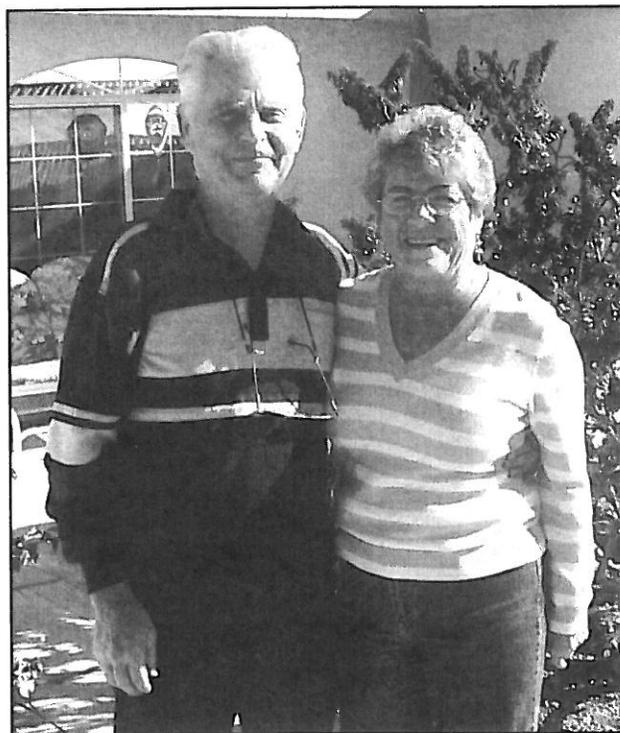
1992 – out of Redding USFS flying Twin Otter

1993 – did not fly jumpers; contracted to fly fish out of Alaska with DC-3

1994 – out of West Yellowstone USFS flying the Twin Otter

1995 – out of NCSB USFS flying the Twin Otter

1996-98 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the EMB 110



Dave and Nila Russell 2008 (Courtesy Larry Longley)

1998 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the EMB 110
1999 – out of Boise USFS flying the Twin Otter
2000 – out of Boise USFS flying the Turbine DC-3
2001 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Turbine DC-3
2002 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212
2003 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212, but ended jump season in Missoula
2004 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212
2005-06 – qualified for dropping jumpers but was not required. (Dave wanted to retire after 37 years continuous full-time flying, so he accepted employment 2005-06 as an “on demand” relief captain.)

During his contract flying and USFS/BLM flying, Dave flew and dropped jumpers and cargo out of every smokejumper base in the western U.S., including Alaska, and all of the Region 8 bases in the East. In 1974, he flew the USFS R-6 Beech 18 and NCSB jumpers Bill Moody, Don Fitzjarrald and Phil Cloward – head of Fire Control for the Okanogan National Forest – to Whitehorse, Yukon, at the request of the Canadian Yukon Territory Forestry and participated in a presentation of the smokejumper program.

While there, Dave and the crew completed several demo jumps around the Whitehorse area. That demo helped set up the contracts for the private Canadian companies’ International Forest Fire Systems (IFFS) from 1975 to 1977 and Kusawa Contracting Ltd., known as Yukon Smokejumpers, from 1978 to 1995.

We smokejumpers would think this amount of flying would be enough. But Dave had other places to fly, so over some of the “off-seasons” he continued to fly in various places. He contracted to the International Red Cross in 1995 out of Geneva, Switzerland, where he flew the Turbine DC-3 in war-ravaged Angola, West Africa.

His stories of flying those mercy missions, while living in those really remote airfields, show his love of flying and, as well, his real love of service to others. Dave reports that several times while delivering humanitarian supplies, bullet holes appeared in the fuselage of the aircraft he flew. It’s likely that bullets were fired by both sides of the conflict; each side thinking the airplane was working for the other side – Red Cross symbol or not, painted on the aircraft.

While in Angola, Dave also flew the four-engine DeHaviland Dash-8 on those missions, which he states is an amazing aircraft.

In the off-seasons of 1997 and 1998, Dave and Nila, his wife, traveled to the Republic of Maldives, off the east coast of central Africa, where he flew tourists to various islands in the Twin Otter on floats. At slow tourist times in the Maldives, Dave and Nila had the opportunity to be tourists themselves and hop a ride on one of the aircraft to get out to one of the exotic island

resorts for sun and sand.

But Dave’s eyes really light up when talking of what is probably his favorite off-season job. In 2000 and 2001, he flew the hydraulic, ski-equipped Turbine DC-3 from Oshkosh, Wis., to Antarctica, working for the National Science Foundation and flying to all the international bases on the icy continent.

If you ever have the chance, be sure to ask Dave about some of his pictures and the flying conditions down under when, during a severe wind storm, he had to start engines and fly the Turbine DC-3 on the ground with one wing tethered, because the winds were so severe the aircraft would want to fly itself.

He can relay some fascinating stories of flying rescue missions, or of flying scientists out in the Antarctic to gather meteors from the surface of the ice.

First, Dave is among the elite for flying smokejumpers and paracargo, then among the elite for flying in Antarctica. Not many pilots can put those feathers in their caps, and you would have to put those feathers in Dave’s cap yourself – because he does not thump his own drum. Ask Dave what his favorite airplane is of all the aircraft. Check out his e-mail address: dc3tpilot@hotmail.com.

Dave also had two employee suggestion awards in his career. The first was in 1976, when he submitted the Fire Behavior Report to the Region 6 office. I was lucky to work with Dave on finalizing that suggestion.

The Fire Behavior Report was a phonetic letter-and-number system used to describe fire behavior over the radio and, if requested, the report could be accurately repeated and a record saved. All fire personnel found problems repeating word-for-word fire conditions from memory or due to radio malfunctions. The pilot/spotter could transmit the FBR report, and the dispatcher would mark the letters and numbers on their report and determine the action taken.

The second award, in 1982, and also submitted in Region 6, was for the use of the Long Range Navigation (LORAN) system to locate and plot forest fires using longitude and latitude. To test the LORAN, Dave had to acquire and install the units in the aircraft, but thanks to his engineering, this was not difficult. The LORAN has since been replaced by the GPS.

So how did Dave get into the USFS? Well, in the summer of 1958, Dave owned and flew his airplane, a military trainer – Interstate Cadet – into the Methow Valley. Dave was hired on an engineering contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a topographer to stake and build a road into Slate Peak, in the heart of the Cascade Mountains (flying time out of NCSB about 15 minutes west).

Slate Peak was to be one of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) point radar sites constructed in the 1950s and

60s and would become a USFS lookout station. That contract, and the fact that he flew his own aircraft in the Methow Valley, led Dave to meet Francis Lufkin, who started many of us on smokejumping careers.

When R-6 needed pilots, Francis contacted Dave and the history started. Upon arriving at the Methow Valley in 1958, Dave was single, but he soon met Nila Lundgren – a local rancher girl from Winthrop – wooed her, married her and flew her out of the valley.

In those 34 years of dropping smokejumpers and their cargo, ferrying fire and administrative personnel, moving tourists from island to island, flying mercy missions in Africa and scientists in Antarctica, Dave and Nila managed to put together more than 52 years of marriage (no small feat in itself these days). They raised two sons, Brett and Les, and daughter Debbie, became the grandparents of six, planted and harvested fruit crops, and built several houses. Congratulations to them.

Dave and Nila also owned and flew their own aircraft to many places in North, Central and South America. There are some good stories of some of those flights, too; such as the time he had to dead-stick land his amphibian on the Okanogan River when his fuel line disconnected, after which one of his passengers caught a Greyhound bus instead of flying again.

During deployment to the many jump bases Dave was working in the summer season, he usually flew the aircraft. Nila would hook up the tag trailer and head out cross country to meet Dave at the jump/retardant base.

Nila, like many of our companions, has some stories of her travels to and from jump bases. No doubt she has traveled a few hundred thousand miles on the nation's highways. The couple now reside part-time in Winthrop, Wash., and in Lake Havasu City, Ariz., and while traveling north and south, spend time visiting with family.

If any of you are “snowbirds” – northern folks heading south in pursuit of good weather in winter – or “desert rats,” or just want to stop by to visit them, then you have to travel through Western Arizona, along the Colorado River on U.S. 95, just south of I-40, and you will travel through Lake Havasu City. This is where Dave and Nila reside from late September to May.

They both like to visit and share travel stories and experiences, and always have beer in the fridge. Dave always had a camera close by or around his neck and has a great collection of photos, so if you stop to visit him, you'd better take a sleeping bag – because once he gets his pictures out and starts into them, the memories will flood your mind.

He has some great pictures and videos of forest fires and the action and sequence around dropping retardant, smokejumpers and paracargo. My interest was piqued when I viewed just some of his fire bust pictures, from

1970, when NCSB hosted more than 170 jumpers from all bases.

There's the picture showing five or six jump DC-3s and Beech-18s parked around and across from the administration shack; or the one showing the plane flying over Lake Chelan, Wenatchee National Forest, during that same bust, where you can see five major smoke columns in the picture and you are with Dave in the Beech 18 and just four jumpers! Photos like these instill adrenaline rush memories.

For many years Dave was curious as to what it was like to be under a parachute, so in 1986, while dispatched to Coolidge, Ariz. to fly lead plane, he ventured over to the local skydiving school. Raising his hand, he took some ground training, and he has entered into his log book three static-line jumps.

I had visited with Dave and Nila at other NCSB functions, but you know reunions: folks travel a long way to get there, tears are flowing, there are hugs – and never enough time to visit with all the people. The events flash by, and you are still looking to talk some more “remember whens ...” Nevertheless, it was at the 2007 NCSB reunion at the Saturday dinner that I really reconnected with Dave and Nila.

It was great to reminisce about our ventures in the past and what we were doing now, and to learn that they and we were RVers and lived part-time in Arizona. It had been a while since we'd last met; I had left USFS/NCSB and emigrated to Canada in 1976, to train smokejumpers in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. I'd also started an industrial sewing business catering to cargo/rescue gear and had lost contact with almost all of my smokejumper associates.

Now my wife, Mary, and I are retired RVing snowbirds. In the course of our travels, we decided to catch up on some of my past, and we stopped in to visit the Russells in Lake Havasu City. My only regret is that we should have done it sooner. We have since become very good friends and look forward to our time together. Of course, Nila and Mary have to use the big shovel to clean up after us.

Quote from Dave Russell: *“I can honestly say I cannot remember a time that I did not enjoy working with the smokejumper group. They are well-respected and highly professional. Their dedicated attitude towards firefighting and smokejumping during my 34 years will always be the highlight of my lifetime.*

“I will always say: Remember that it was ‘the men in the back’ who really coordinated the aircraft jumper missions that produced an excellent team for successful and safe mission.”

Quote from Mike: *“I say it takes a good man up front to finish in the back.”* †



THE JUMP LIST



The Jump List is intended to bring you up-to-date on your fellow NSA members. Send your information to Chuck Shelley; see his contact information on page 3 of this magazine.

W.H. "BILL" BRANDT (Missoula '47)

Now living in: Corvallis, Ore.

Jumped: MSO 47

Since jumping: Graduated from University of Montana with a bachelor's degree in Botany in 1950, and from Ohio State University with a Ph.D. in Botany in 1954; worked as research biologist at the B.F. Goodrich Research Center in Brecksville, Ohio, until 1956; joined the science faculty of Oregon State University, retiring from there in 1990; while in Oregon, active in Republican politics, civic theater, the Santiam Pass Ski Patrol, art collecting, singing groups, and two terms as president of the Oregon State Chapter of the American Association of University Professors; spent a week on NSA's Trail Maintenance Project at Beaver Creek in the Flathead National Forest in 2007; spent six years on the board of the American Historical Print Collectors Society; published a book, *Interpretive Wood-Engraving: the Story of the Society of American Wood-Engravers*, in 2009.

STARR JENKINS (Cave Junction '48)

Now living in: San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Jumped: CJ 48, MSO 49

Since jumping: Joined Dave Burt (MSO-47) in June 1950 to parachute into Glen Canyon – before the dam was built – to take a float trip in an inflated life raft for six days down the Colorado River, visiting Rainbow Bridge on a side trip en route; make it through in fairly good shape; got married and taught high school English and history for five years in Albuquerque, N.M. (my home town at the time); then joined U.S. Forest Service in the Albuquerque Regional Office as writer and photographer for four years; had attended Stanford University in 1951-52, and completed a creative writing thesis and got a Master's degree in English seven years later; with this degree was able to teach in college and was accepted to do so at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo; main career was 27 years of teaching English.

Starr says: "I've written and published two books of interest to anyone concerned about smokejumping. They are *Smokejumpers, '49: Brothers in the Sky* and *More Than My Share – An Adventure Memoir*. There are many aerial-forestry and park-ranger adventures in the second

one. I'll send a signed copy of each of these books to anyone sending me a check for \$30 for each book. I'm age 85 now. I've been retired for almost 23 years! Both my wife Stella and I are grateful to still be in reasonably good health and able to walk around and do things. We had our 60th wedding anniversary in August 2010 and to celebrate took our first cruise to Alaska to see some of that great land. While in Fairbanks I was able to deliver gift copies of both of those books to the BLM smokejumper base at the airport through one of the young jumpers – Jason Schroeder (FBX-08) of Truckee, Calif. – who came over to our tour to pick them up. They were given to honor Murry Taylor (RDD-65), longtime Alaska jumper and author of *Jumping Fire*, the greatest smokejumping book so far written."

HAROLD "HAL" WERNER (North Cascades '48)

Now living in: Spanaway, Wash.

Jumped: NCSB 48-51, CJ 55, RDD 57

Since jumping: Following 1957 fire season, returned to Brigham Young University in Utah and completed bachelor's degree in Physical Education; was able to finance education costs after receiving GI Bill thanks to serving in the Korean War, 1951-55, as well as track and field scholarships as javelin thrower on BYU track team; set conference record and toured Europe with team; competed against future Norwegian Olympian Egil Danielson; also set personal best record with wooden javelin in Finland at 232 feet, 10 inches; returned to Washington State, where I grew up, in 1958 and completed a master's degree in Physical Education at Washington State University, with thesis being the first done on the West Coast about the technical aspects of analyzing javelin throwing success; after receiving teaching certificate, began career of teaching and coaching that continued from 1959 until 2010; first teaching assignment was in junior high for classes in reading, mechanical drawing and physical education; as I think back on those responsibilities, I realize that starting out being associated with that age level of young people taught me how to deal with the attitudes that affected these curious individuals, as they certainly taught me patience.

Hal says: "On the aspect of the athletic development, I am always reminded of a certain skinny individual who was classified by his classmates as being a 'sissy and

Jump List continued on page 45



Wilderness Canoe Base – A Memorable Gathering With Fantastic Company

by **Fred Donner** (Missoula '59)

Wilderness Canoe Base 2011 was a combined Forest Service and church camp project involving jumpers, wives, associates and WCB staff. **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57), **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) and **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) – all NSA board members – brought their lovely wives, respectively Judy, K.G. and Marceil. (Note that I didn't say these were lovely couples – only that the wives were lovely.) Jim Cherry and Chuck Sheley need no introduction to readers, but I will add that they are two obsessive and compulsive characters. Jim is determined to eliminate invasive balsam fir in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, while Chuck left no stone unturned looking for dirty dishes as chief dishwasher. (My wife should have such a husband.)

John McDaniel, a retired Navy pilot, once the air boss on a nuclear carrier, had led our first Eastern states volunteer crew in West Virginia in June. John is a native West Virginia redneck, but he wore shoes for this project.

Ed Schlachtenhaufen (associate), now a retired Lutheran pastor in Wisconsin, was a junior high school, high school, forestry school, and seminary classmate of Jim Cherry. It seems that retired Lutheran pastors come in pairs like Roman Catholic sisters.

Jack Heiden (CJ-54) was an orthopedist in Madison, Wis., for 42 years until he tired of night calls. He is now a part-time Veterans Administration hospital doctor.

Robert Miller (MSO-61) retired from a career with the Alberta Forest Service after a short stint tiring of regulations in the U.S. Forest Service. He brought his friend, **Charles Paul** (associate), a retired copier repairman. Both Bob and Charles have extensive Habitat for Humanity experience, which proved useful.

Ed and Charles, as associate NSA members, were new, but all the jumpers had many previous projects. All the men, except one 60s kid, were in their 70s. (I didn't ask about the ages of wives. Contrary to popular opinion, I am not totally uncouth.)

I was on my fifth project and second Boundary

Waters project, coming easily from our second home in Minnesota. I was acclaimed by voice vote to write this report, mine the only "nay" vote. **Scott Belknap** (MYL-83), **Jack Atkins** (MSO-68), **Richard Trinity** (MSO-66) and WCB staff member Christian Bane will be adding their separate report on the Forest Service project completed.

None of this would have happened without the outstanding work of Drew Heinonen, WCB manager. Drew was a WCB canoe guide for three years before he became manager. After graduating from a Lutheran college, Drew studied lutherie and became a Lutheran luthier. Those jumpers who never finished school and never learned to use a dictionary can have someone look up these words.

What is WCB?

WCB is a Lutheran church camp begun in 1956. During his active pastorate, Jim Cherry was WCB director for 10 years from 1973; thus the obvious connection as to how NSA got to WCB for now the second year.

It is located on Fishhook Island and Dominion Island at the end of the Gunflint Trail, about 58 miles northwest of Grand Marais, Minn. The Gunflint Trail is one of the longest school bus and postal routes in the country. About half of aptly named Fishhook Island is in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

Main base on Fishhook is reached by watercraft from the Gunflint Trail in summer and by vehicle over ice in winter. The rustic timber, open-air chapel and other buildings on Dominion Island are reached by a magnificent cable-suspension bridge from Fishhook.

WCB has been partially destroyed by fire at least three times in its history. The many buildings, some of them massive, are scattered over approximately 40 acres on Fishhook and accessed only by rocky trails. Every single item that comes to either island is hand-carried to its destination. This includes heavy timbers, cement and steel, as well as all food and supplies.

There are no wheeled vehicles on either island. Electricity and telephone come by submarine cable from the mainland. Propane comes via the only underwater propane supply system in Minnesota. An electrical system supplies treated lake water for consumption and a propane-powered system supplies untreated water to a system of fire sprinklers.

The six outhouses at WCB are the eighth wonder of the architectural world. Since the rocky terrain does not lend itself to conventional digging, another solution was required. Each outhouse sits atop four six-by-six pillars extending ten or more feet in the air.

Each one is actually a duplex with two doors sharing an inside wall. An elevated wooden walkway reaches to the nearest rocky outcropping. The receptacle is a huge, vertical culvert pipe, perhaps five feet in diameter and at least 10 feet high. One does not go after dropped objects. The one pictured was inspired by Dr. Seuss.

What did we do?

We were the only occupants of camp, arriving after the summer camping season and before fall and winter



Top Row L-R: John McDaniel (CJ-57), Marceil McDaniel, Fred Donner (MSO-59), Jack Heiden (CJ-54), Ed Schlachtenhaufen (Assoc.), Charlie Paul (Assoc.), Jack Atkins (MSO-68). 2nd Row L-R: Scott Belknap (MYC-83), Chuck Sheley (CJ-59). 3rd Row L-R: Richard Trinity (MSO-66), K.G. Sheley, Judy Cherry. Bottom L-R: Jim Cherry (MSO-57), Christian Bane (WCB), Robert Miller (MSO-61). (Courtesy J. Cherry/J. McDaniel)



The duplex outhouse (Courtesy Fred Donner)

retreats begin. The first day came wet, windy and cold and delayed the launching of the canoe crew. The second day was a little better and the canoeists departed. The rest of the week was warm, autumn shirt-sleeve weather, considerably raising morale.

For those of us who stayed at WCB, a principal project was “fire-wising” the many wooden structures. We were not “fireproofing” the camp by removing trees but trimming trees to chest height and removing ground clutter for about 10 yards around each building to reduce ground level fuels. We also cleared brush from fire sprinkler heads to get better water dispersion, if needed.

Another major project was removing high scaffolding from a newly constructed outhouse and carrying the heavy lumber to the dock for recycling. Bob and Charles, our Habitat veterans, with help from Ed and Jack, stained the faded exterior of the dining room and main lodge “Pinecliff” and somehow seemed to keep clean doing it. They also replaced some window frames, worn handrails and steps.

The aforementioned lovely ladies planned meals

with considerable help from Drew, the only WCB staffer present. Jim Cherry, as he usually does, brought lots of Iowa meat and vegetables and honey for the larder, telling us all how good Iowa products are. Everyone pitched in with kitchen and dining room chores. As “*a propos*” for a church camp, table grace was said or sung at every meal.

Did we have fun?

Happy Hour arrived at 4:30 each afternoon in the Pinecliff lodge near the fireplace adjoining the dining room. We watched the “Smokejumper” DVD, a good experience for the associates and Drew. Drew took us on several water trips exploring Seagull Lake surrounding Fishhook and Dominion Islands.

Most evenings were spent around the Pinecliff fireplace. Luthier Drew and Christian entertained us with a musical program our last evening.

John and Marceil were sleeping upstairs, the only nighttime occupants of Pinecliff, and they were overrun by mice the first night. Five-gallon buckets, half-full of water with peanut butter bait suspended on rods across the top, were deployed the remainder of our stay. The “mouse count” of the mice drowned the night before was a featured announcement at breakfast. I suggested keeping a cat in Pinecliff and not feeding it too well.

Entertainment was furnished after lunch each day in the form of Ole-and-Sven and Ole-and-Lena jokes. This was to introduce Minnesota culture to the various non-natives present. Drew is a superb raconteur with same. You can Google “Ole and Sven” or “Ole and Lena” to get some of the flavor for yourself.

Once again, as I never tire of saying, we disguise our NSA projects as patriotism and public service, when actually we are reliving the best job we ever had with the greatest bunch of people we ever knew. ☘

From Telephone Wires To Tangled Antlers – The Little Trout Creek Fire

by “Wild Bill” Yensen (McCall '53)

Gene Dickey (MYC-54) and I jumped this fire Sept. 2, 1954. Gene and I were sent to Chamberlain, Aug. 21, on a 10-day project to take down and roll up telephone wire.

Radios were coming in, and the old phone system

never worked very well because the storms that set most of the fires blew trees and snags over, which took down the wires and then the phones wouldn't work. Also, the wires were dangerous to the elk, as they would get their antlers tangled up in the wire

and die of broken necks or starvation.

They flew us to Chamberlain in the Travelair, and we were packed out to a campsite somewhere down Chamberlain Creek where we went to work. We would have to climb the trees that had wires attached and get the wire down and the insulators off.

Once we got about a quarter-mile down, we would cut the wire and attach one end to a reel and wind it up; then we'd put it on the trail so the packer could find it and take it back to Chamberlain. During my first three years of jumping, I went on several projects to bring in the wire.

On the day we were supposed to go back to McCall, we returned to Chamberlain only to see the Travelair coming our way. It brought us jump gear, so instead of going back to McCall to clean up, we had to suit up and go jump this fire.

I was not very happy about this. The fire was right on the rim of the Salmon River on a west-facing slope. I was also disappointed that they brought me the elephant bag and jump gear belonging to Miles Johnson (MYC-53), but I got it on and we jumped.

It was about 1400 and we had about an acre of fire, so we set to work; we had it lined by dark and mopped up by about midnight. We were in the sun, which beat down all afternoon, and we really busted ass to get the fire out. Needless to say, we did a lot of sweating and drank a lot of water.

The next morning we got ready for breakfast and found we had used up all of our water, so we couldn't make coffee. In those days, we each only took a quart canteen and a gallon tin can that usually rusted, so we would change our water every few days when we were in camp in McCall. The canteen I used that year was a World War I issue stamped 1917.

We really needed to find some water. The nearest water we could see was in the Salmon River, way down there about three quarters of a mile and 4,000 feet below us. We looked in all the draws up the river and found no water.

We returned to camp and drank all the juice we had and then went downstream. Two ridges to the west, we came upon the Trout Creek Fire that had burned the year before. We followed the old fire line down some distance and found two five-gallon tin cans; one was half full of water. It was pretty rusty, but it was wet and we were thirsty!

We drank our fill, then filled our canteens and gallon cans and went back to camp. By that time it was late afternoon, so we checked the fire and didn't find any smokes. We sacked out, two very tired young men.

We packed up our gear the next morning and carried it to a trail that led down to Chamberlain. It

was pretty cold and I was glad of it, because I stepped over a log and nearly stepped on a rattlesnake that was coiled up under a small bush. On a hot afternoon I might have been bitten. I still have the snake's rattle.

As we thrashed through the bush with those blasted elephant bags, we came upon a little clearing that was covered with bones. In the middle were two bull elk skulls with tangled-up antlers. I was bummed because I had run out of film and they were much too heavy to pack.

I could imagine those two bulls fighting and getting locked up. One probably broke the other one's neck, got pulled down, and then probably starved to death. I saw two skulls with tangled antlers in a museum in Vernal, Utah, years later.

We met the packer on the trail. He took the elephant bags and put them on the mules; we then walked the rest of the 17 miles back to Chamberlain. The Travelair was there waiting for us, so we loaded our gear and flew away. It was so late that it got dark on the way back to McCall, and we had to land with the runway lights on.

Gene and I were very happy to be back in McCall, as we had been gone for two weeks. We went to the kitchen and got fed, checked our mail, and then we did what smokejumpers do – we went to the Yacht Club and had a beer. That was the end of the season for me, so the next day I terminated and headed back to college for my senior year. †

Interested In Being On A Trail Project Next Year?

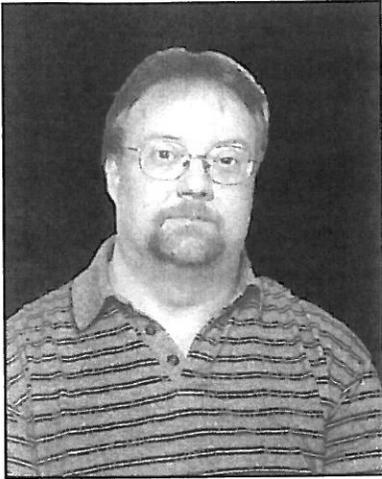
The projects for the summer of 2011 were completed with over 150 participating in a week-long "vacation" on 19 projects in eight states.

The West Virginia project headed up by **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) was the first west of the Mississippi and involved a crew of 15 individuals, nine of them from the eastern states.

If you live in the east and are interested in organizing another project, contact John. He can help you. The projects for 2012 will be identified in January with the list posted on the website along with signup information.

If you have questions about the Trail Program, contact Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) at 406-251-1306 or frederi920@aol.com.

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

HAVE YOU HEARD of the Waldron Creek Fire? I hadn't until an article in the *Great Falls, MT Tribune* in September.

Dr. Charlie Palmer (MSO-95) is writing a book on the fire which occurred on the Rocky Mountain Front, 30 miles west of Choteau, Mont., Aug. 25, 1931, and resulted in the deaths of five men fighting the fire.

The five men killed fighting the fire were Herbert Novotny of Great Falls; his friend Frank Williamson of Great Falls; Hjalmar G. Gudmundson of Arborg, Manitoba; Charles Allen of Pittsburgh; and Ted Bierchen of Chicago. Novotny was an African American while the others were white.

In the course of his research, Palmer discovered that Novotny – who is buried in Highland Cemetery in Great Falls – did not have a headstone. Palmer got a headstone donated and arranged to bring Novotny's family back to Great Falls to dedicate his headstone.

On Sept. 25, 2011, 80 years and one month after he lost his life fighting the Waldron Creek Fire, we gathered on a hot, windy, red flag day – a day probably much like Aug. 25, 1931 – to honor and remember Herbert Novotny.

His daughter attended, along with other members of his family; Charlie Palmer and his family; a local historian; members of the Great Falls African American community; and City Commissioner Bill Bronson. I was also present, as were members of the Raynesford-Kibbe Volunteer Fire Department, who brought a Type 6 engine and drove 40 miles to be there and pay their respects to a brother firefighter and his family.

Hymns were sung, prayers were offered up, and Bronson read a proclamation. It was a touching and meaningful ceremony.

Novotny's new marker reads: HERBERT NOVOTNY 3-9-07 – 8-25-31 GAVE HIS LIFE FIGHTING THE WALDRON CREEK FIRE "WE WILL REMEMBER"

Afterward, Novotny's daughter, Palmer and I joined others who walked up the hill from Novotny's grave and paid our respects to his friend, Frank Williamson. While that section of the cemetery has been maintained fairly well, Williamson's headstone has weathered to the point that it is nearly unreadable.

Of the men lost on the Waldron Creek Fire, only Frank Williamson and now Herbert

Novotny have headstones. Gudmundson and Allen are buried in unmarked graves in the Choteau Cemetery. Bierchen is supposed to be buried in St. Henry's Cemetery in Chicago but his grave has not been located.

A tip of the hard hat to Malisani, Inc. of Great Falls, the monument business which provided Novotny's headstone; Roy and Diane Volk of the Best Western Heritage Inn; and Palmer for making this event happen.

Palmer mentioned at the ceremony that the next step was to get markers for the men buried in Choteau. I personally would also like to see Williamson's marker re-sandblasted. I don't know if he has any family in the Great Falls area.

There is much more to this story, but I will let Palmer tell it. In the meantime, has anyone been able to locate the burial site of Pfc. Malvin Brown (PNOR-45)?

A tip of the hard hat to 7-year old Rachael Peterson of West Riverside-Bonner, Mont., who was one of the first people to report the West Riverside Fire which broke out on the evening of Aug. 22, 2011.

"We were playing Barbies on the porch and I heard a 'poof,' like a firework. Then I saw smoke and so I said, 'Uh oh – I should tell Dad,'" she explained.

Good job, Rachael!

The arson fire eventually went to 3,800 acres. No arrests have been made. †

Going Full Circle: A Jump Home

by Cameron Chambers (North Cascades '04)

I woke in the sterile hotel room at 6 a.m. – day five of a boost and sore after a three-day fire on the Lewis and Clark. By seven I stood in front of the box for roll call.

I grouped in among the 20 other jumpers at the Missoula Aerial Fire Depot (ADF) between lockers hastily strewn with Kevlar jumpsuits and nylon parachutes. The pungent odor of stale fire smoke hung in the air. Everyone was bleary-eyed and zoned, some from a hard night in downtown Missoula and others from the fatigue that busy weeks of fire season accumulate – most from both.

Standing among the walls of records, the ops guy rambled the morning briefing – a predictable oration on the day's weather, fire reports, extra safety conditions, and whatever else got spouted that day.

Thirty-five years earlier, my father stood in the same spot getting about the same briefing. It was my first boost to Missoula, the duty station of my father's jump career. I'd been to the base several times – as a curious kid – for interviews, but never as a jumper with a chute hanging on the rack. And while a hungover 7 a.m. briefing is too early to piece together a major insight into the father/son jump connection, I found myself falling back to childhood memories.

There was the burn pile at the ranger station heaped head high with red needles, where I learned to drop fire from a drip torch. Lunches with Old Mike, the groundskeeper, and scavenger hunts in the back forty for discarded treasures.

These were the memories of a child euphoric with his forest playground. Then I recalled my high school days in suburban Helena, thinking my father a moron for sticking with the Forest Service.

I'd watched him move through the ranks, move the family for promotions, get passed up for promotions, and grow frustrated with the agency once studied as a model of efficiency.

As he moved up, he found himself inadvertently moving from the wood of the forest to the hard-planned wood of a sterile government desk. In the office environs, he was a man of action ground down by the lethargy of bureaucracy and politics. I watched for two decades a losing battle of a principled man fighting the standstill of productive forestry practices.

I recalled a vow made as a high schooler, among living room stacks of topo maps and legal briefs 400



Cameron Chambers on last jump July 2010. (Courtesy C. Chambers)

pages thick, not to follow my father into the misery of a green uniform. But there I was at the AFD, eating my words in place of the breakfast I skipped. Seven years into a Forest Service fire career and a permanent position later, I stood poised in the same exact position of my father.

After just seven years with the agency, it was clear the bull-nosed efficiency of "Pinchot's Boys" – for which the Forest Service staked claims on competence and land – no longer existed. I saw an agency riddled with problems, both self- and congressionally imposed, striving to cope with changing times and the changing values of Americans.

It lacked a true sense of itself or even what type of metamorphosis it would accomplish, given the opportunity. It seemed as if every year a new management philosophy, program or paradigm came down the pike. The agency expended its limited time and resources on implementation, only to disregard it the next year when the latest-and-greatest, end-all-be-all policy arrived. And despite two generations of observations, I broke my high school vow and laced my crusty boots for another day.

An hour after the morning briefing, the shrill sound

of the siren echoed through the concrete walls. Smokejumpers hustled to get their 85 pounds of gear on in the right order. As I hung my reserve parachute in place and grabbed my helmet, I overheard the spotter say “the Lolo.” It was short for the Lolo National Forest and was, coincidentally, where my formative years were spent while my father served as the Superior District ranger.

The plane was off the ground into the dense smoky air that has become summer in Missoula. Crammed next to each other, we tried to steal glances out the boxy windows of the Shorts Brothers Sherpa, hoping to be the first to glimpse fate as if a fractional second head start might somehow prove an advantage.

Out the left side windows, our fire burned mid-slope. It grew from two acres the night before to 15 that morning. The local fire staff wanted the 10 smokejumpers to bolster the efforts of the local firefighters already on the ground and corral it before it became any larger. Their real concern was that the fire might spread to the nearby town of St. Regis, the location for the Superior District ranger’s government housing.

Too focused on the tight, steep jump spot into which I was trying to maneuver my parachute, it didn’t occur to me, but as I made my way from sky to earth I could easily see the brown shingled roof of my first home. It was there that I got my first feel of fire and I’m sure the culprit that led me to sign up for a Forest Service fire crew during college summer breaks.

I lived in that brown-shingled house in the summer of 1988 when I was 6 years old. For me that was just old enough to start remembering, and those images of ’88 stay with me longer and stronger than most.

The fire of 1988, and probably the decade, was the Yellowstone Park Fire. It burned 793,000 acres of America’s favorite national park and, to this day, continues to maintain such a preponderance of importance that many forget that the rest of the Western United States was on fire as well.

While my father was called to Yellowstone, along with 15,000 other firefighters, there were also lines of yellow school buses and rows of yellow-shirted firefighters outside our front window.

They had been brought in from places like Harlowtown, Hardy and Big Sandy to deal with our local fires. They came in every evening around 8 o’clock to eat hot food out of big white buckets and fall asleep in disheveled rows of rectangular, yellow government sleeping bags.

Sometime between that summer’s catching of turtles and building of forts, the images of my father discussing plans for the Yellowstone Fire on the NBC

Nightly News and haggard, black-faced firefighters on my lawn must have stuck with me.

For an impressionable adolescent in a forestry community, it all seemed so heroic. It was the closest thing I had in real life to the GI Joe cartoons I watched every Saturday – uniformed men carrying dangerous-looking tools and talking in gruff, Copenhagen-lipped voices.

The blood-red sunsets of smoke-filled skies and images of 200-foot flames shooting from running crown fires solidified my notions that those firefighters were going to battle. They were real American heroes, and of course, I wanted to be one.

On the ground safely, we 10 smokejumpers made our way to the fire to begin constructing our rudimentary fire line. Using chain saws and Pulaskis, we chopped, dug and scraped what looked like an ill-used trail to stop the advance of the fire.

Aided by the weather, and gallons of sweat, we managed to line the fire and contain it. With numerous other fires in the area, we hiked out of the fire by 8 p.m. to get picked up at the nearest road and shuttled somewhere to rest in preparation for another fire.

As I sat in the back of the green truck motoring down the road, the landscape felt familiar. When the truck took a left turn over the rusting yellow cattle guard, past the St. Regis Work Center sign, I had the distinct familiarity of being home.

A half-mile up the road on the left, past the big old warehouse and the caretaker’s trailer where I ate lunch with Old Mike, was my first home. I’d bounced over that cattle guard and past that sign on foot, bicycles and wagons several hundred times before, but I was back bouncing over it as the one thing I had idolized while I had been there – a firefighter.

Walking around the short loop of the compound’s road system, the grass was longer and less cared-for than I remembered, our house painted a new color, and the trees thinned. It was, after all, a government facility, and they don’t tend to change much. It all appeared about as it had 20 years earlier when we made the same loop in the ’72 Dodge pickup and headed out over the rusted yellow cattle guard for my father’s promotion in Helena and the last time as residents of the St. Regis Work Center.

Even seven years into a fire career, I’d never conceded to it as a career. While I love the work, the people, the excitement, and give it my all, I hinged my complete commitment to the job on the fear of it becoming a career – becoming my frustrated father. When I worked seasonally as a temp, I convinced myself it was just an indulgence of youthful fantasies.

I planned to put my business degree to use and utilize those internship contacts from college. I saw

myself joining the world of Corporate America where common sense, hard work and performance were measures that still meant promotions. Of course, those plans drift away little by little – like fire smoke into a dark sky – every year they wait. Those idyllic notions of both the business world and the Forest Service become increasingly tempered by time.

That leaves me standing in my 10-inch leather fire boots on the lawn of my first home, looking so much like an image of my father that I can't deny it any longer. Being home has brought the eye of reality back upon me and I am undeniably confronted with the fact that I am becoming my father.

There are all sorts of counter-arguments I can, and do, make to keep me living in ignorance and bliss. We have different personalities; we could take different paths within the agency; it was just the time period of the 80s; and on and on. The simple truth, however, is that the agency is as static as the work center I'm standing in, and I'm on the verge of becoming a lifelong part of it – just as my father has, and not too different



Cameron and Dwight Chambers Missoula 2010 (Courtesy C. Chambers)

than the paint-peeled warehouse down the gravel road.

Standing on my first front lawn, surveying the small work center, it's easy to get a feeling of proprietorship. If only from a longer history with the compound than the others assembled, it wells a sense of pride and ownership.

Surveying the grounds, I get what must be but a small shiver of the feeling my father received standing in the same place – looking out not only at the small compound of his charge, but the miles upon miles of National Forest for which he was directly responsible.

It's an undeniably enchanting feeling. Add to this a steady paycheck, generous retirement funding and educational allowances, and it starts to make more sense why my father still wears green jeans to work.

For my part, jumping is hard to beat and the old Forest Circus is still less messed-up than most government agencies. From inside the fence I see what kept my father going through the frustration.

While there may be impenetrable bureaucracy littered with mind-numbing irrationality, the government pays good money to play in the woods. Hard work, yes, but the toys are big, cool and expensive. More than one firefighter has remarked that it's not dissimilar to getting paid to be a kid again.

There's a reason senators, astronauts, mountaineers and a slew of successful Corporate America-types say fighting fire was the best job they had. There's been more than one time I looked around and thought I can't believe someone's paying me to do this.

And that's why I'm still in it – "living the dream," as the old smokejumper saying goes. Most smokejumpers, however, didn't watch their fathers climb the ranks and see both the frustration and the favorable.

The thing about sleep – and to some degree, life – is that it's done unconsciously, leaving the door open for dreams to drift into nightmares. And waking at midnight in my yellow government sleeping bag on the lawn of my old home, it's hard not to read the big yellow rectangle as a gigantic caution sign.

To causally slip down the hereditary path or to fight the fire of momentum? It's a question with no right answers. It's a question best answered by another old smokejumper favorite: "Hard sayin', not knowin'." 🦋

Cameron Chambers jumped for three more years before taking a job with the Seattle Fire Department. He now believes all agencies are riddled with bureaucracy, but gets to wear a blue uniform.

Dwight Chambers (MSO-66) lives in Helena, Mont., where he retired as the Helena National Forest Litigation Officer in 2008 after 38 years of service. He jumped at Missoula in 1966 and 1967.

Another View of The Higgins Ridge Fire

by Roger Siemens (Missoula '59)

I especially enjoyed Ross Parry's (MSO-59) article in the January 2010 issue of *Smokejumper*. It was a story very close to my heart. I was also on the Higgins Ridge Fire in 1961 and, as I read the words, that day was brought back to me like it was yesterday.

I would like to add just a little to Ross' article, but more importantly, share the Missoulian newspaper articles that I saved for 50 years about the fire and helicopter rescue.

As a brief introduction, I started jumping in 1959 while attending the University of Montana and continued jumping until I graduated in 1964. There were not many Wildlife Biologist jobs available at the time, so I accepted a transfer to the Sula Ranger District of the Bitterroot NF. Herb Oertli (MSO-48) had been the District Fire Control Officer for several years and wanted to return to jumping, so we swapped positions. I continued with the Forest Service until retirement in 1994 as District Ranger on the Jefferson Ranger District, Deerlodge NF.

Now, on to the story. Ross Parry was the squadleader for the initial eight-man crew out of Grangeville and jumped the fire the morning of August 4. I was a member of the 12-man backup crew out of Missoula that consisted of Fritz Wolfrum (MSO-53), Don Dobberfulh (MSO-58), Neil Walstad (MSO-61), Darrel Peterson (MSO-50), Don Gordon (MSO-59), Andy Geair (MSO-61), Jim Elms (MSO-59), Monti Leraas (MSO-60), Jack Saunders (MSO-61), Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61), James VanVleck (MSO-61) and myself. Fritz Wolfrum was the foreman of our crew and took over the fire after we landed and tied in with Ross and his crew.

The fire continued to grow that afternoon and things got worse fast! After Fritz realized that we were in big trouble and unable to contain the fire, he told us to "wet ourselves down the best we could, tie something over our face and to follow him." We did! After



Rod Snider (Courtesy Roger Siemens)

going through the fire and into the burn near the ridge top, we had major problems with smoke, lack of oxygen and falling trees as the fire had exploded in all directions. We could hardly breathe due to lack of oxygen, but then, like a miracle, the wind would shift bringing in fresh air.

These conditions continued throughout the afternoon.

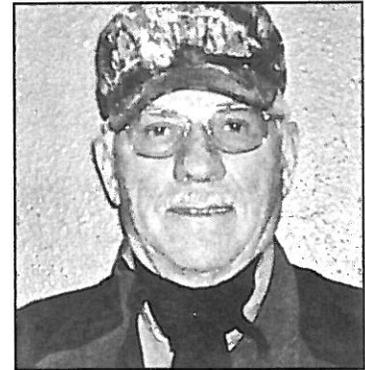
Helicopter pilot Rod Snider (NCSB-51) and Ranger Bill Magnuson had been circling the fire for some time looking for jumpers. Not finding anyone, they started searching inside the fire and eventually spotted our orange fire shirts hunkered down near the top of the ridge. In spite of very high winds, heat and smoke, Rod Snider was able to land. This was my first helicopter ride, but I did not have a chance to get inside. Rod started hauling us out four at a time, two inside with him and two outside on the cargo racks. The last thing I remember him hollering to us was "do not let your hard hats fly into the rotors." So I climbed onto the rack, placed my hard hat under my chest and held on for dear life.

Engineers later reported that considering the altitude, heat, wind and weight, it was not possible for Rod's small helicopter to perform as it did. But it did! The helicopter may have performed beyond its capabilities, but Rod's skill, experience and cool head prevailed and made it happen.

The Helicopter Association of America recognized Rod's work by awarding him the "National Pilot of the Year" award in 1961. The *Missoulian* covered the rescue and award in two articles in August 1961.

Rod, Fritz and Ross were highly experienced and talented leaders. They made all the right decisions in a matter of seconds, under extreme conditions. If they had made a wrong decision (i.e. try to out run the fire or start a backfire), we would not be here today. Thanks Fritz, Ross and Rod. †

Roger and his wife, Rita, live near Silver Star and can be reached at 5655, Hwy 41 North, Silver Star, MT 59751 or at (406) 287-5638.



Roger Siemens (Courtesy R. Siemens)

LETTER TO EDITOR

“Should I Stay or Should I Go?”

by Charles Palmer (MSO-95)

In the July 2011 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, the “Message from the President” asked what others think about the current tendency for smokejumpers to stay in the program longer than they may have done in the past. John Twiss’ (RAC-67) thoughtful column inspired me to weigh in on the matter.

Obviously, there are pros and cons to each philosophy. With a higher turnover of the smokejumper population, as in the past, there seems to be a greater likelihood that those individuals leaving the jumper ranks will migrate to other positions of influence, whether that is within other fire organizations or somewhere else in the public or private sector.

The clear downside is that you are losing some of your most experienced and trained folks when this happens. On the flipside, career smokejumpers – or at least people who jump for longer periods of time – probably possess a broader array of firefighter/smokejumper-related skill sets (rigger certifications, fireline explosive qualifications, task force/strike team leader experience or even division supervisor qualified, incident commander Type 3, etc.) and hold a more extensive institutional knowledge of smokejumping, theoretically making them more capable operators.

One of the main challenges is that if they never leave the smokejumper organization, personal and professional growth may plateau because those individuals are not being exposed to different occupational cultures and philosophies.

The “easy” answer is that there needs to be some sort of healthy balance between retention and turnover. To answer the eternal question of the band “The Clash”: Some should stay, while others need to go.

But how to actually put this theory of balance into action and in what percentages? Those are the hard questions. One potential solution is that of recently retired Missoula base manager Edmund Ward (MSO-80), who highly encouraged individuals who were looking to move up through the smokejumper ranks to take their talents outside the jumper unit for a couple of years before seeking that promotion. A great example is current Missoula base manager Mike Fritsen (MSO-95).

If hiring considerations were given to individuals who did just this, then it would lead to a greater circulation of personnel in and out of smokejumping.

Another approach could be more extensive training opportunities for current smokejumpers. Training is the lifeblood of any organization, but unfortunately, budgets for it are often cut at the first sign of fiscal distress.

National fire managers need to resist this negative trend. Training leads to IQCS red card qualifications, and it is these qualifications that will help jumpers as they attempt to migrate into other positions. Smokejumpers themselves can and should take a more active role in their own education, whether that be a general quest for knowledge and growth, or more specific in the form of certificate programs, college degrees, or EMS qualifications (e.g., emergency medical technician-basic).

Support from a wide variety of sources, both financially and socially, would be of great help as jumpers attempt to do this. Perhaps the National Smokejumper Association can start a scholarship fund for current jumpers who want to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities.**

Regardless of whether a person stays in the smokejumper organization or leaves, if we all continue to do whatever it is that we can to support the profession, it will stand a much better chance of continuing to exist as an occupation.

Maybe you jumped for a couple of seasons and moved on to something else, and now the best way for you to support smokejumping is through a life membership in the NSA. Maybe you are a former jumper and now a natural resource manager who is in a position to utilize smokejumpers in some way on your forest or district, be it suppression or project work of some type.

Or lastly, maybe you are a current jumper and the best way you can support the program is to continue to set the example that smokejumpers are indeed this “elite” force of fire professionals. Whichever category you find yourself in, do whatever you can to make a positive impact on smokejumping as a whole. ♣

***The NSA has instituted a scholarship program for active jumpers and members of the association, or direct family members of active NSA jumpers. This is the first year of the \$1,000 awards for students committed to obtaining advanced education. This year’s recipients, Joseph Philpott (NIFC-09) and Matthew Castellon (MYC-08), were featured in the October issue of “Smokejumper.”*