



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2020

# SMOKEJUMPER

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## Message from the President



by **Bob McKean**  
(Missoula '67)  
President

I AM DRAWN to wild places. To be there refreshes my soul! One of our common experiences as smokejumpers is that we were/are privileged to see so many of our nation's wild and natural places! I continue to have vivid memories of places I visited as a jumper: Glacier and Yellowstone Parks, the Gila, the Brooks Range, the North Cascades, the Bob Marshall, the Bitterroots, and the Salmon River country, to name but a few.

My youth has long since passed, but I am blessed with life-long smokejumper friends who encourage me to go on NSA trail projects or float trips to some of those same places.

As your president, I am also privileged to give back by working with the National Smokejumper Association (NSA) Board in support of the NSA mission.

*"The National Smokejumper Association, through a cadre of volunteers and partnerships, is dedicated to preserving the his-*

*tory and lore of smokejumping, maintaining and restoring our nation's forest and rangeland resources, and responding to special needs of smokejumpers and their families."*

The last few issues of *Smokejumper* have included articles about how the number, size, and intensity of fires have increased over the last few decades. Mega fires are now a regular occurrence with commensurate devastation of resources, property and life. As climate changes, one can only guess what these fires may be like and how they will impact our children and theirs.

Heretofore, your Board has taken no formal position regarding the management of these fires and associated issues of fuels and forest management, fire suppression, roles and responsibilities in the wildland-urban interface, et al. As your president, I have posed questions regarding these issues, attempting to evoke responses in the form of articles for *Smokejumper* from others with expertise, since my own is limited in these areas. (See *Message from the President* in the July and October issues of *Smokejumper*.)

That said, on the heels of several fires in Montana in 2017 and the Carr and Camp Fires in California in 2018, as well as the reality that the situation is likely to grow considerably worse in the future,

there seems a groundswell from Board members to consider if the NSA should attempt to add a constructive voice to the conversation. To this end, Board members requested an opportunity to explore this question at the NSA Board meeting on October 15, 2019.

I believe advocacy is appropriate for NSA. It is consistent with our mission of *maintaining and restoring our nation's forest and rangeland resources*.

Several years ago when the Forest Service was contemplating the transition to square canopies, there were a couple of articles in *Smokejumper* written by individuals questioning the wisdom of the change. At its subsequent meeting, the Board received a visit from a high-ranking Forest Service official who came to discuss the matter; his appearance on the heels of these articles was a message in its own right. One comment he made, that particularly resonated with me, was essentially this, "You (NSA/smokejumpers) have earned the right to a voice. Use it wisely!"

Of course individual members are always

encouraged to weigh in on matters. Diversity of opinion is important and makes us think in ways we may not have considered.

If the Board chooses to weigh in on specific issues on behalf of the NSA, it should do so prudently. This is especially important if we want to represent our membership and be taken seriously. To this end, my view is that any positions taken by the NSA are likely best if they are from the perspective of advocating for means to help those involved (Forest Service, BLM, Park Service, and other wildland firefighting entities, or units within) to be more effective. Further, they should reflect science and/or best practice as established by experts. (The NSA has access to numerous experts who may assist us with this.)

In any event, by the time you receive this issue of *Smokejumper*, the Board will have had an initial discussion about this—so stay tuned.

In other news...

### Workforce Capacity Study

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees recently published a study entitled, *Sustaining the Forest Service: Increasing the Workforce Capacity to Increase the Pace and Scale of Restoration on National Forest Service Lands* (July 25, 2019). The NSA Board will be reviewing this document at its meeting. Conclusions and Recommendations from the report follow:

*Hire, train and mentor employees with the skill sets necessary to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. Change the overall workforce composition.*

*Take immediate action to revamp the hiring process, streamlining procedures, removing all roadblocks and restoring connections with field units. It takes far too long to recruit and hire skilled employees.*

*Eliminate administrative burdens that currently take valuable time from personnel charged with managing programs in the field and achieving results on the ground. Increase funding to hire new employees, contract work and enter into partnerships needed to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration.*

*Delegate authority to field units that currently have responsibility for results, but not the commensurate authorities.*

*Implement all actions previously suggested by NAF-SR including regulatory and administrative reforms and the 2021 budget initiative. Success can only be achieved through comprehensive reform.* 🌲

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### *Smokejumper* base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	Grangeville .....GAC	Redding .....RDD
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	Missoula .....MSO	Winthrop.....NCSB

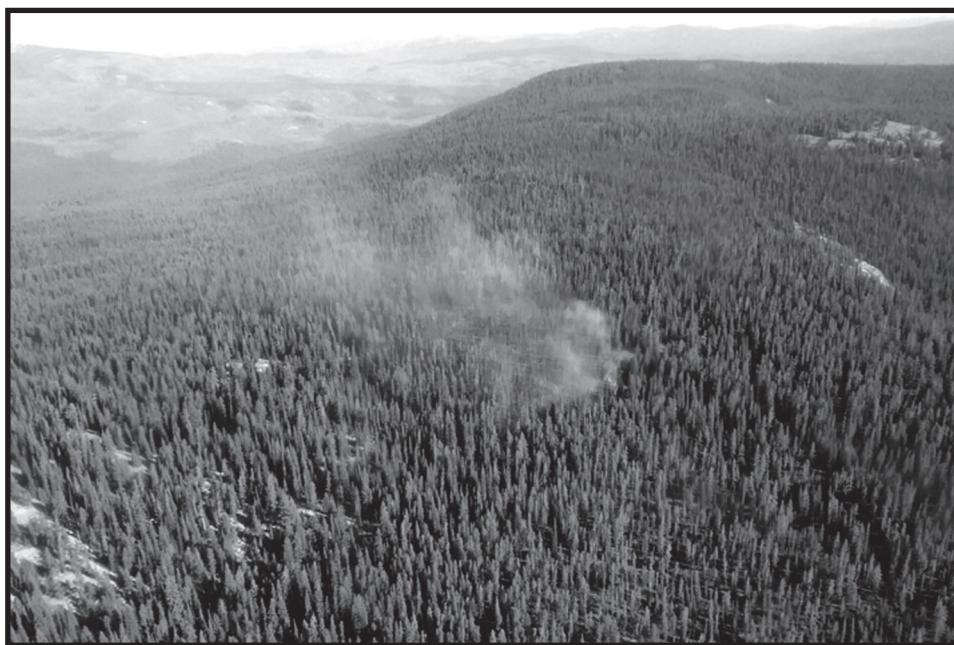


## Cheto Bar Fire & Meyers/Whetstone Fire

*Photos: NSA File*



**Chetco Bar Fire • 191,090 Acres, \$61 Million**



**Meyers/Whetstone Fire • 62,034 Acres, \$32.5 Million**

*Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)*



# Save A Billion \$\$ A Year—The New Fire Triangle

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

## Introduction

We all know that wildfire is moving toward becoming a national crisis. As editor of *Smokeyjumper*, I am continually reaching out to writers from various backgrounds. Varied opinions and thoughts are important to throw into the discussion.

Michael Rains (Assoc.) has written some great articles on the importance of increasing the biomass industry in the U.S. Why not reduce the fuel load, add 300,000 jobs, and actually manage our forests? Hard to figure why no one in the government has figured this out.

Bottom line from Michael, to paraphrase—The 2020 USFS budget shows an **increase** of \$1.6 **billion** in the wildland firefighting budget and a **decrease** of \$91 million in the forest management budget. We are treating the disease (wildfire) rather than preventing the disease (forest management).

It is easy to see why the public accepts this short-range view. Have an emergency situation, like a hurricane, flood or wildfire, and everyone wants to throw money at it without limit. But when it comes to preventing these emergencies, the public moans and groans about expenditures.

We rebuild homes destroyed in annual floods and hurricanes at taxpayer expense. Actually, the future generations will foot the bill as our national debt is headed toward the moon.

In this article, I want to show how we can

save a *billion* dollars a year in the expense of fighting wildfire. The thread that I am using is common sense—what would you, a reader, do if presented with a problem and options to solve that problem?

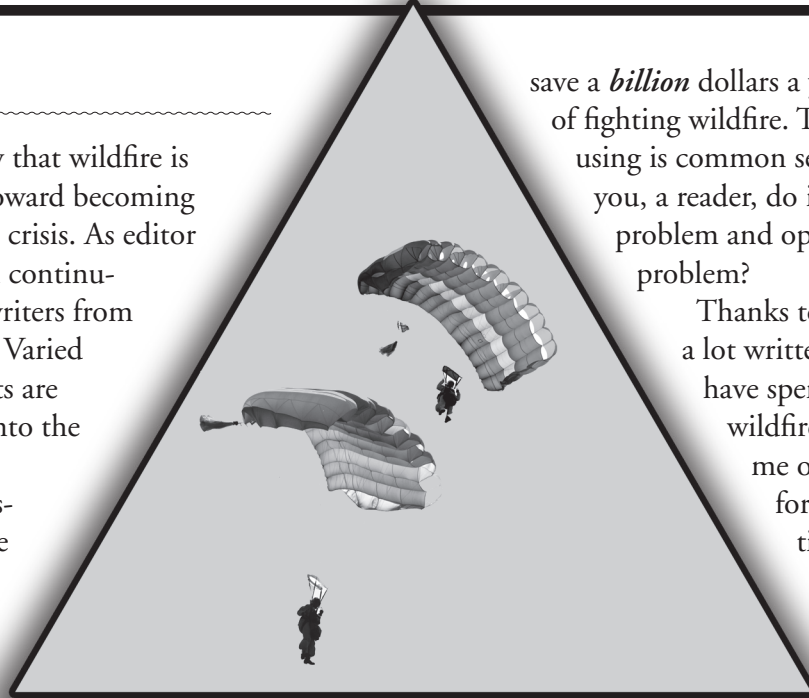
Thanks to the Internet, I read a lot written by people who have spent their careers in wildfire. They all remind me of the people I worked for and with during my time with the Forest Service and the BLM—the best way to fight fire is to put it out.

The more information I get, the more I become discouraged. What happened to common sense? I'm going to throw out some ideas and thoughts that our leaders should take a look at.

## Let It Burn—Isn't That The Way?

First, I need to say that "let burn" is not the term to use as the USFS does not recognize it. We need to say "managed fire" even though it sure looks like "let burn." Youmus B. Chitenmee, my friend from D.C., asks some great questions in another article in this issue. He would ask: "If you don't put out a fire, aren't you letting it burn?"

There is the thought that due to our great job of putting out wildfire for over 100 years, our forests have become clogged and overgrown. That could be true. Historically, wildfire has burned



millions of acres. But let's face it, the U.S. is a different place in 2019 than it was in 1550.

I've heard so many references of how the Native Americans burned the landscape and managed the forests. However, I really don't think they had annual planned, prescribed burns and firecrews. My best guess is that they did use fire as a tool with a minimal amount of management. They probably gave it more thought than we do now and started their fires later in the season, when they would not burn out of the "box." Lastly, when any fires they set really turned into a "gobbler," they just got up and moved.

What is my point? We now are a nation of close to 330 million people. We do not have the option to let wildfire burn naturally, in my opinion. Even in Wilderness Areas, the smoke created by wildfire is causing large areas of our country to be under a cloud of smoke for months at a time. Has the Forest Service thrown the increased expenses in healthcare into the equation? Not a chance. If we add billions to our national healthcare expenses, that is not their worry.

## There Is A Way To Save A Billion \$\$ Annually

My reasoning for this statement is based on rapid Initial Attack (IA) using three "arrows in the wildfire quiver." Let's take a look at these "three arrows": Smokejumpers, Fire Boss Aircraft, and the Klump Pump.

The annual expenditure for fighting wildfire increased to almost three **billion** dollars in 2018, more than 12 times the amount spent in 1985 (US News). Bottom line, unless you live on Mars, you can see that we are in a critical situation—I would call it a National Crisis. It is now time for all members of Congress from the Western States to stand up and demand that we recognize that we have a problem that will continue to grow annually.

In the interview with Youmus B. Chitenmee (Citizen) in this issue, he says, "I'm from D.C., and we don't know much about wildfire back there." I think that Youmus knows more than our elected officials in the Western U.S. We will see what Youmus comes up with if he can talk to

Wilford E. (Smoke) Baer and his brother, Booger. Youmus did a great interview with those two in the January and April issues of *Smokejumper*.

## First Way To Save A Billion \$\$

Reverse the trend and let smokejumpers be used as they were designed to be used in 1940—initial attack as soon as possible. USFS smokejumper use in 2018 went down by over 300 fire jumps compared with the 10-year average. Jumpers jumped 35 fewer fires than that 10-year average.

Let's see—an increase in the length of the fire season by months, more money spent in controlling wildfire than in history, and less use of jumpers. Is there a move to eliminate smokejumpers?

What happened to the days when smokejumpers flew the forest after a lightning bust and jumped fires as they found them?

I have never experienced a more successful fire season than the one I had in New Mexico in 1961. If I remember correctly, we, a 24-man crew, had 460 fire jumps—a very busy season. We flew the storms and caught the fires while they were still in the trees that had been hit by lightning—average fire, one-tenth of an acre.

I check the Smokejumper Status Report on the NSA website daily. It has been frustrating in past years to see the number of new fires and the large number of smokejumpers *not* in action. What is the thinking here? Is there a plan? Rapid IA, smaller fires, less money spent, less risk, and more available resources to fight the ones that get away—what is wrong with that?

Bottom line—there should be **NO** available smokejumpers on the daily status report. Everyone should be out on a fire. Somewhere along the line, the ability of smokejumpers to put out fire has been lost. They are a renewable resource. Contrary to Forest Service talk, there has never been a time when "there are no smokejumpers available." Use 'em!

*From the Cave Junction logbook, courtesy Wes Brown (CJ-66): Entry for July 17, 1968: "The Klamath N.F. ordered 16 Jumpers for the Sam Gulch Fire. Pilot Ewing and Spotter Dee Dutton (MSO-51), assisted by Jerry Katt (CJ-67), dropped Wessell,*



Wayers, Mewhinney, Hartman, Oliver, Bucklew, McNally, Wold, Ward, Mills, Smith, Greiner, Odell, Mansfield, Brown and McMinnimy.

*"Redding also dropped 16 jumpers on the fire, and it was controlled at about 160 acres. All the jumpers dropped on a ridge above the fire. 16 Jumpers went down each side of the fire and stopped it from becoming a monster."*

*Wes continues: "The account jogged my memory. This lightning fire, jumped on a hot and windy afternoon, was located in steep brushy terrain in the Klamath River drainage. Considering the youth of the firefighters and the spirit of the times, it isn't too surprising that the crews' effort turned into a virtual fireline construction race between the Redding and Siskiyou jumper crews. Just imagine, jumpers, aided by retardant drops, cutting lines from ridgetop to the creek at the bottom in a single afternoon. Quick response, less smoke! Jumpers away."*

## Second Way To Save A Billion \$\$

Station a Fire Boss aircraft on every forest. Actually, the Fire Boss aircraft are most effective working in pairs—that will be the subject of a future article. The move is to Large Air Tankers (LATs). I want to counter that thought with the idea that keeping a fire small is less expensive than fighting one of these multi-million dollar fires that are occurring annually on a regular basis. That is a really tough thing to do. If you put out a fire at two acres, how do you prove that it would have become a multi-million \$\$ fire if "let burn"? Common sense would tell you that, but look at the budget—less money in 2020 for forest management and more money for fighting wildfire.

I have become an advocate of the Fire Boss aircraft or the Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT). Here's an introduction: 800 gallon tank, quick loading, can scoop reload in 45 seconds from water source, 3.5 -hour fuel endurance—contract cost \$4,500 per day plus \$4,500 per hour flight time when in use—more than twice the carrying capacity of a medium helicopter—dispatched from airport loaded with retardant or water, remain 3+ hours at the fire scooping water from nearby source—can upload up to 20 loads (13,000 gallons) per hour depending upon suitable scooping source—the 20 loads/hour are more than a single load DC-10.

Even better than that, I heard from Brett L'Espereance (Dauntless Air) an amazing accounting of a Fire Boss on a fire in Alaska: *"Last week in Alaska, we set a new record for a 3.5 hour fuel cycle – 107 drops with a Fire Boss! That equates to roughly 70,000 gallons in 3.5 hours. At \$4,500 per flight hour, that boils down to \$0.23 per gallon—less than a quarter!"*

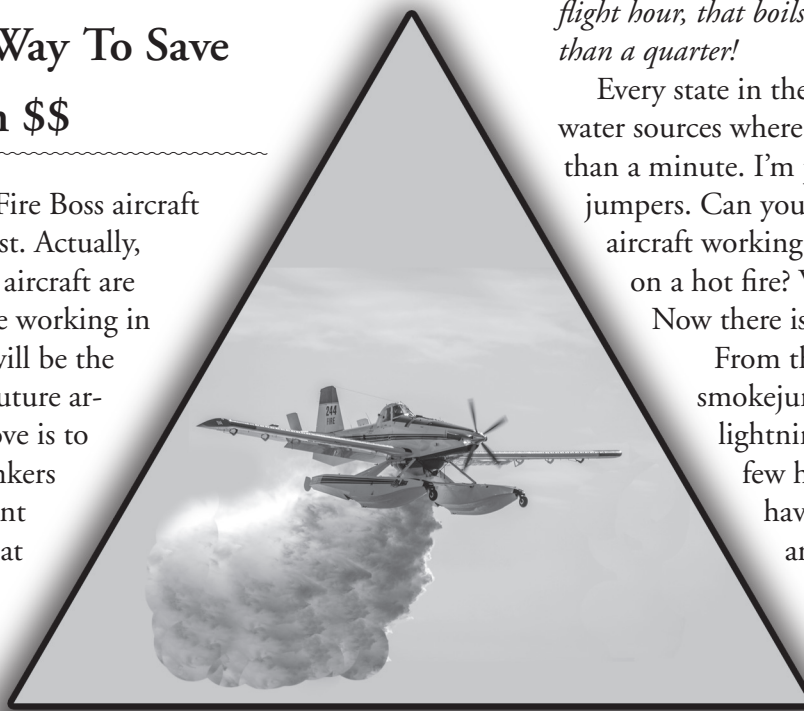
Every state in the Western U.S. has multiple water sources where a Fire Boss can reload in less than a minute. I'm primarily talking to smokejumpers. Can you imagine having one of these aircraft working with you for over three hours on a hot fire? We didn't have it in our days.

Now there is the potential to do this!

From the old days to the new days, smokejumpers fly the forest after a lightning storm. They jump fires a few hours after they start. They have a Fire Boss that can fly low and slow, working with them if needed. The fire does not become a multi-million dollar fire but just a single page fire report. We have just saved almost a **billion** dollars with this concept

per season. Remember, managing or putting out a fire is just a fraction of the expenses related to a large fire.

Now, we get to the point. Who gives a darn? The money is there and increasing annually. Big fires are big business. Let's look at the Large Air Tanker (LAT) business. They go in the ballpark of \$20,000 to \$35,000 a day, PLUS \$10,000 to



\$18,000 per flight hour. They make a great show for the evening news. That 747 dropping retardant on the fires in the Napa Valley a couple years ago probably made thousands of viewers have a feeling of relief. Since I could not even see the fire, I thought this might have been one of those drops to make the public feel safe. That single drop might have funded a SEAT for a whole season on a forest. Where are we going?

The public is being brainwashed. The LAT business will continue to grow in spite of some practical thinking that only those who jumped fires will know. Rapid initial attack will save money, lives, resources and time. Money spent on prepositioning of resources will do the job, but we are conditioned to spend vast amounts of dollars on fighting the beast rather than killing the beast at birth.

Bottom line: Be prepared in the years to come to see a vast increase in money spent in fighting wildfire and a decrease in the amount spent in preventing wildfire—react to the disaster rather than prevent the disaster. Isn't that the American Way?

The important point is that with some common sense, we could prevent these disastrous wildfires.

## SEAT vs LAT

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I didn't know what I was getting into when I started on this piece for this issue. Air tankers are a big business—don't even question them! I didn't know what I was stepping into—pretty deep.

I hope that I got the information correct as I went to Bill Gabbert's *Fire & Aviation News*. He averaged the rates for three models of large air tankers (BAe-146, RJ85, and C-130) and he came up with \$30,150 as a daily rate—that means standing by. If used, there is an **additional** \$7,601 hourly rate. The Single Engine Air Tankers, like the Fire Boss, run about \$4,500 daily rate plus \$4,500 additional per flight hour.

Back to the common citizen: It looks like we could have six Fire Boss aircraft stationed around the forest for every LAT. Wow—Shazam! We have a lightning storm hit the area and have over 7,000 strikes starting multiple fires. What do we do?

We ponder that the LAT carries a very large load and needs a long takeoff and landing runway. It is located many miles from the fire. Due to the expense, the people on the fire do not want to call in a LAT when the fire is just a snag and one acre.

## No SEATs On Contract?

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I had a heck of a time finding information on USFS air tanker contracts. You joke about the closed society in Communist China. You should try to get information from anyone currently working for the Forest Service. Please refer to my article on the hiring system in the Oct. 2018 issue of *Smokejumper*. Even our PhD's couldn't translate the jibble I got.

I finally found out that the USFS has only a single SEAT on contract. The rest are LATs. Let's go back to the common sense point of view. Wouldn't it be better to have six Fire Boss aircraft spread out around the forests vs LATs based at large airports miles away? As a jumper, I would love to have the advantage of an aircraft that could work a fire with me for over three hours, depending upon the water source. Regardless of the water source, six aircraft could certainly work more fires than one aircraft. Is that thinking too far out of the box? Makes sense to me.

What does your local fire department do to cover your city? Do they build a single large facility with the best of resources in the middle of the city? No! As a city expands, fire stations are added so that the response time is cut to a minimum.

Let's compare that to the USFS response. LATs are located at airports where they have long runways. Fire Boss aircraft can be spread out over the forests in locations with smaller runways. A lightning storm comes through and there are 7,000 strikes that start 25 fires. Common sense question: Can multiple Fire Boss aircraft stationed on the forests react to a fire quicker than a few LATs located at a large airport? Would a forest even call an expensive LAT for a single snag fire?

The big problem is that these single-snag fires develop into multi-million dollar fires, as exhibited by the Whetstone Ridge/Myers Fire and the Lolo Peak Fire in Montana. A load of jumpers and local Fire Boss aircraft could have turned a



hundred million \$\$ expense into a single page fire report.

*From Troy Kurth (FBX-62): "When we did a study on the use of SEATs, we found two SEATs at Missoula were effective initial attack out to a 60 mile radius. We also had more than adequate airports to place two SEATs with 30 minute IA at the outer ring. The cost of SEATs verses large tankers favored the SEATs for IA. Most important, our five LATs were always pulled when the fire danger was the highest to go to a large fire. We then lost the initial attack advantage of air attack."*

*"The effective early attack of two SEATs crossing on the fire WITH THE INTENT OF REMOVING HEAT was superior to the large 3,000-gal airtanker within 30 minutes of dispatch."*

*"I rode aircraft many hours as an Air Attack Boss—both IA and large fires. I recall many IA fires knocked down with two F7F 800-gal tankers that held fast till a ground crew arrived."*

## Safety of SEATs and Fire Boss Aircraft

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I hear that the USFS does not contract SEATs and Fire Boss aircraft because of the safety issue—single engine vs multi-engines. Show me the statistics that prove that the multi-engine air tankers are safer than SEATs! We all have worked fires—the SEATs are basically a modified crop duster. Which aircraft can fly low and slow and hit that hotspot?

I've just been editing a book by Lee Gossett (RDD-57), who flew thousands of hours in the Pilatus Porter in Laos. There could not have been a more challenging job. Runways on side hills, runways going up, runways going down—add to that someone shooting at you. Single engine dangerous, not dependable—BS! Talk to Lee who has spent thousands of hours in them. If any Cal Fire or contract pilots want to debate the dependability of the single-engine aircraft, let's sit down with Lee over a couple Sierra Nevada Torpedo beers and discuss the issue. I know dropping on fires is very dangerous but compare that with a similar situation while taking ground fire from the Pathet Lao.

One more thought for you: If the USFS only contracts LATs, doesn't that mean they are preparing for **large** fires? Who would want to spend \$50,000 on a lightning-struck snag? Speaking of lightning-struck snags, the Lolo and Whetstone Ridge Fires (MT) were spotted and reported as such—what we would call, in the old days, a two-manner. **\$80 million** and 116,000 acres later. What the heck, it's only your money.

*From John Finnertry (Assoc.): "There are more important parameters than gallons per hour, especially in initial attack and direct attack. LATs have maneuverability limitations that limit accuracy in steep terrain and smokey conditions. Their massive loads are often used effectively for indirect attack. LATs are a good 'box' fire tool."*

*"Initial attack often requires precision drops in a timely manner. Many small but frequent drops seem to benefit initial attack greatly. SEATs are much more maneuverable than LATs and can therefore deliver more precise drops more frequently. Helicopters can deal with terrain, smoke, and wind better than SEATs. Helicopters may carry smaller loads, so turnaround time is always an issue."*

*"A concern that I have in using LATs on initial attack is they will most likely split their loads into small increments. This will block the airspace for an extended period of time while they take multiple passes. This will delay all other initial attack aircraft that may be more useful in the initial attack environment."*

## Are There Unknowns With Air Tankers—Follow The Money

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First—we have the safety issue, which is a smoke screen. Let's get back to the movie "Jerry McGuire." Tom Cruise (Jerry McGuire): "Show me the money." Cuba Gooding (Rod Tidwell sports agent): "I wanna make sure you're ready, brother. Here it is: Show me the money. Oh-ho-ho! SHOW! ME! THE! MONEY! A-ha-ha! Jerry, doesn't it make you feel good just to say that! Say it with me one time, Jerry."

From a source: *"The USFS is heavily lobbied by the retardant manufacturer out there (there is only one globally) and the Large Air Tanker operators."*

*The big guys spend a lot of time in D.C. Aero Flite, the largest LAT operator in the U.S. (almost \$80M in revenues and a lot of large retardant dropping aircraft) is actually the U.S. subsidiary of ConAir, the dominant aerial firefighting company north of the border. Those profits go back to Canadians, not Americans."*

How many retired Cal Fire, USFS are working for the airtanker industry? I don't know. It happens everywhere. Retired personnel go to work for the industry. What is better after retiring than to become a part of their business?

Here is a personal example. When I was running 10-13 fire crews for the Mendocino N.F. in the 80s, I had local bus contractors for my crews. Over a period of time, larger contractors, with a lot of money backing them, moved in and took over the operation. My local bus contractors went out of business. Big money vs local small business—guess who is going to win?

What I saw was that high-level retired USFS employees were working for the large bus contractors that shut down my local operators. As Jerry McGuire said, "Show me the money." Back to the common sense: Can you see what is going on in the air tanker business?

## Airtankers—A Good Expenditure Or A Show For The Public?

The following comes from an ex-smokejumper who has moved on into the air attack end of wildfire. He will remain anonymous as many of my sources are still working in the business.

"In my current position, I fly as many extended attack fires on federal land as I do on state protection. The Federal Leadplane program is disintegrating due to a variety of factors related to an apathetic, top-heavy beauracracy. Their current group of pilots are retiring or leaving for other positions faster than they can hire and train replacements.

"I get to work a lot of Federal fires, and I can't hardly believe how absurd they have become. It's mostly just a big show for the media. They spend \$3 million a day now and, I bet, less than one percent of that goes to actual line construction. They have become so 'risk adverse,' they hardly engage anymore. They would be better off taking the entire fire budget and spend it on aggressive Initial Attack.

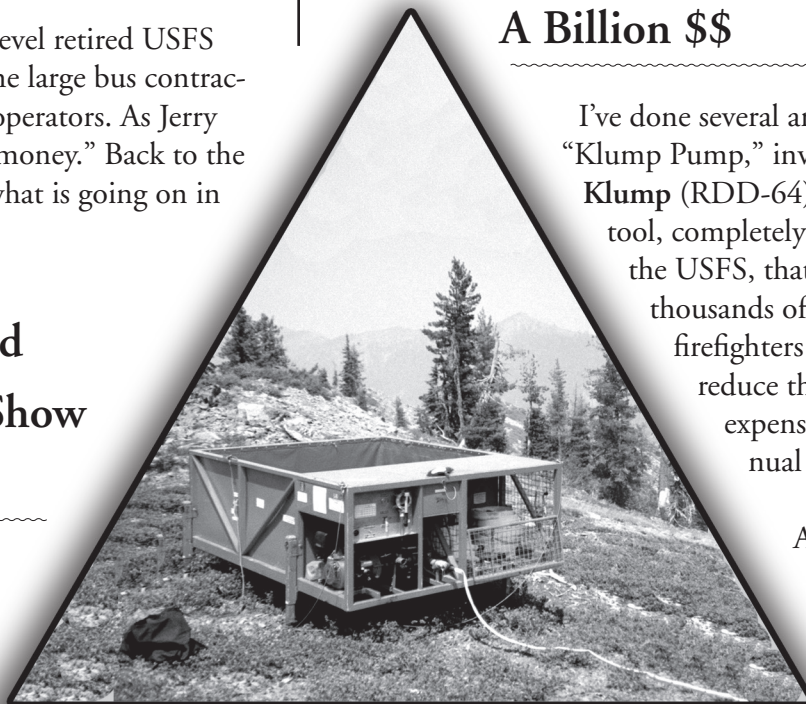
**"This will be my 43<sup>rd</sup> consecutive fire season and, as much as I have enjoyed it, I am becoming more pessimistic about the future of wild-land firefighting.** There are plenty of great folks out there giving it their best effort, but they are so outnumbered by apathetic beauracrats. It is almost impossible for them to become successful."

## Third Way To Save A Billion \$\$

I've done several articles on the "Klump Pump," invented by **Jim Klump** (RDD-64). Here is a tool, completely ignored by the USFS, that could save thousands of acres, make firefighters safe, and reduce the outrageous expenses of our annual wildfires.

A review:  
As Jim says,  
"This machine, when you look at it, is a 'no-

brainer.' It's a Type II engine without a chassis. The 1,000-gallon capacity, 2,200-foot hose complement and fitting complement fit the Type II engine classification. The decision to use a machine, such as this, is also very simple. If an incident decision-maker asks him/herself, 'If I can get a conventional engine on this, would I?' If he or she can't, the logical solution then is another 'no-brainer' – order Klump Pumps!





“They are delivered to an incident on either two- or three-unit trailers. They are unloaded at the helibase, and setup takes 20-30 minutes per machine. The leveling jacks are attached. Hose, fittings, and support equipment are stowed into their compartment for air transport. The lifting harness is fixed to the four lifting points. The machine was designed aerodynamically. It remains quite stable in flight at 80 knots. Once delivered out to the line, it’s a matter of a few minutes to level, begin filling, and deploy hose lines.”

Back to you as smokejumpers—just think of the potential of putting out fires if you had 1,000 gallons of water, replenished by a helicopter, coming down the hill through a hose lay that could be expanded multiple times. You have constant air attack, if needed, by locally located Fire Boss aircraft. Think you could stop these megafires if given the chance of rapid initial attack?

## The Answers Are All There— Does Anyone Care?

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We have the tools, the personnel, and the know-how to cut our annual wildfire expenditure and loss of forests. The key: Do we have the leadership to do the job? It doesn’t look like it. The current leadership shies away from rapid IA in many cases. They say the hills are too steep, working at night is too dangerous (we actually know better), and on and on. What do they say—excuses are like———, everyone has one.

Michael Rains has done an excellent article in this issue. Wildfire smoke is now a public health issue. We spend months under smoke from fires that could have been prevented by rapid initial attack. The USFS looks at it another way—they are meeting their annual burn requirements.

What they are missing in that equation is that while they may meet their burn requirements by “managing” wildfire, they are killing thousands of our citizens with the smoke they have put into our air.

Whenever we lose a firefighter on a fire, it becomes an event of national importance. No one wants to lose a life. But if 40,000 people die

18-20 years down the line from the constant layer of smoke over our communities, it is an unknown and forgotten.

My fellow teacher and coach was a Vietnam Marine. He died 25 years after the war from brain cancer. Wonder if there was a connection between that and the amount of Agent Orange he was doused with?

Same with the amount of smoke you are breathing each summer. It won’t get you today, this year, but down the line our healthcare budget will be bankrupted by treatment for lung disease, and the death rate from these fires will not be acknowledged.

The new fire triangle:

1. Smokejumpers for rapid initial attack—actually doesn’t have to be smokejumpers. The fastest resource to reach the fire is the answer.

2. Many Fire Boss aircraft stationed on forests. Less money than the LATs and quicker response. Six Fire Boss aircraft for the cost of one LAT—which resource could cover the most fires?

3. The Klump Pump—a tool that should change the way we fight fires in inaccessible areas. I could name multiple fires that could have been stopped at the early stage, but one stands out.

## The Chetco Bar Fire

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The Chetco Bar Fire in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area of the Siskiyou N.F. burned over 191,000 acres and cost many millions. This fire was covered in the October 2018 issue of *Smoke-jumper*. As smokejumpers, you scratch your head when you hear the rappeller crew didn’t go down to the fire because the hill was “too steep and the leaves too slippery.” We all know that in our experiences that excuse would have gotten us fired. Apparently, that is acceptable nowadays.

There is a citizens group in Brookings, Oregon, that has brought a lawsuit against the USFS for their handling of this fire. At this time, I do not know all the details. But I have heard that fire personnel went on to private land and started a burnout on their property.

There are many factors here. An airline pilot

discovered the fire 17 days after its start. Since the USFS had shut down lookouts, why wasn't the area flown after the lightning storm? It is almost like this fire was "wanted."

The Kalmiopsis Wilderness has burned many times since the 2002 Biscuit Fire. The USFS standpoint: Wilderness fires are natural and should be let-burn. This reduces the fuel load. If that is correct, why have we had a billion \$\$ in fire in the Kalmiopsis since the Biscuit Fire? If these fires are natural, why spend a billion \$\$ fighting them? Answer: It is your money.

From **Quentin Rhoades** (MSO-89) who has represented people making a claim against the USFS and their current wildfire policies:

*"We, the public, are supposed to understand that Global Climate Disruption is making wildfire more frequent and more intense in the American West. We are supposed to understand that the increase in urban/wildland interface makes wildfire of greater economic and human risk. We know that megafires release catastrophic amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. And we now know, from bitter experience, that megafires leave in their wake arid deserts incapable, among other things, of meaningful carbon sequestration.*

*"Since these are the facts, then why are forest managers not becoming MORE aggressive with Initial Attack instead of LESS so? Why are they not using more smokejumpers and heli-rappellers instead of fewer? If there are going to be more wildfires than ever and the risks associated with wildfires—including the development of megafires—are greater than ever, then why NOT use the most aggressive Initial Attack strategies and tactics possible to keep the costs,*

*risks, and impacts of wildfires in this new era as small as possible?*

*"The answer is simple. The problem is a moral one. In fact, the once proud USFS has lost its fortitude and abandoned its former dauntless will to implement effective Initial Attack. Its loss of courage comes at just the wrong moment in history, when the costs and risks associated with wildfire are now greater than ever before. USFS stewardship was once characterized by a clear-eyed determination to fight wildfire with aggressive and effective means and intent. The 10:00 a.m. Rule was not a policy of the weak. Now is the time for it to recover its lost strength and do its job: protect the resource—and the public.*

*"I urge anyone who is studying this issue to take a hike, a drive through or a low-level flyover of the megafire area of the Silver Fire (1987), the Biscuit Fire (2002), and the Chetco Bar Fire (2017), as I did recently (Siskiyou NF). It's a moonscape. Hundreds of thousands of acres of new desert existing in a formerly lush temperate region, right in the middle of SW Oregon, created on behalf of the public by federal land managers. Such man-made environmental devastation ought to yield some tangible benefit in trade-off, as an open-pit mine yields minerals for electric car batteries or a cleared rainforest results in space to grow coffee beans. Here, the devastated landscape yields nothing. A site visit will raise your consciousness like no words ever could."*

*The movement for change is starting to form. It may take a long time to make this change. Contact your congressperson and local politicians. Let's go back to a good forest management plan. 🌲*

## Guest Opinion: Defensible Space, A Catch-22

by **Bernie Spanogle** (USFS-Ret.)

**L**ike many old-timers in the U.S. Forest Service, I had a great career during the "good old days." I started in 1972 fresh out of the Army, worked on six national forests, and retired

in 1997 on the Shoshone N.F. Taking seriously the old cowboy saying, "When the horse dies, dismount," I took an early out.

During my career, I was fortunate to acquire



a background in prescribed natural fire (PNF), prescribed fire and wildfire suppression (FBAN) in the Forest Service. I encountered my fair share of smoldering home foundations on wildfire assignments.

When the opportunity for a Department of Agriculture fire-wise coordinator position came to Park County, Wyo., I took it hoping to help those in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) reduce risks to their structures located in and along the east flanks of large roadless, designated wilderness and national park areas.

It is not uncommon for PNF or wildfires in those areas to roll out of public and into private land. Visualize the Yellowstone fires of 1988, if you will.

The Wildfire Protection Plan for Park County indicated a huge WUI area at risk. I identified more than 200 landowners with structures where defensible space assessments should be done.

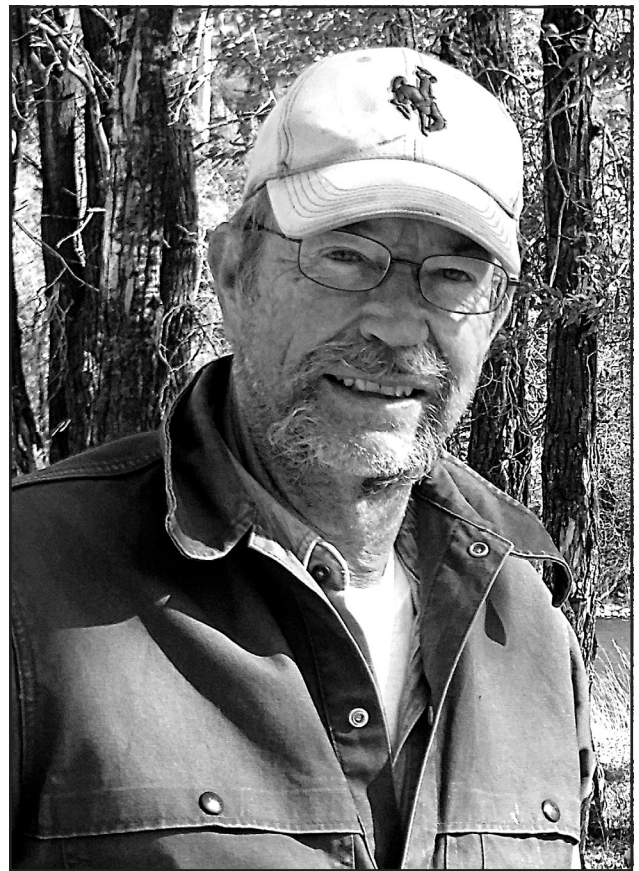
They were all notified of the risks. I did assessments on only 30 properties. Otherwise, there was very little interest, even when smoke filled the air and fires threatened.

So what was the mindset of all those folks living out there in WUI land? My visits were free. The assessments were free. There were no government requirements or obligations. It was a voluntary program. In a lot of cases, cost-share money was available to help clean up the forests surrounding their structures.

For the summer homes and lodges in the national forest, the Forest Service did hazard fuel reduction right up to the structures. But defensible space also involves structure mitigation itself. Ignition zones need to be removed on and around the structure if it is to be protected.

Why? Because spotting from wind-driven crown fires ignite these ignition sources from as much as a mile away. Homes were and can be destroyed as a result of spotting regardless of hazard fuel reduction nearby.

So after five years, what were my observations for this lack of participation? Rest assured, there are some people who are responsible and accountable for their properties, about 20 percent to be fair. They listened, took advice, worked hard, and took no cost-share funding to make and maintain defensible property.



*Bernie Spanogle (Courtesy B. Spanogle)*

I accredit those independent folks for living and following the “Code of the West”: Be responsible, accountable and get ‘er done.

However, the vast majority took a different approach to protecting their properties. I would call it apathy. Their belief (and experience) is if a fire approaches, the overhead team will send a crew out to remove the hazard fuels and clean up around the structure, at no cost or labor to them.

The volunteer fire department or Forest Service is also expected to be there to protect the structure with engines because, in their minds, that is their job and responsibility. After all, that’s why we pay taxes, right?

But what if the VFD or Forest Service is short on resources, or has to cut and run because of fire behavior and the structure burns down? Fear not; the homeowner’s insurance will pay to rebuild and restock their structure. Never mind the memories lost or the inconvenience of rebuilding.

And if that isn’t enough, and if all else fails, Uncle Sam could be there with disaster relief funding to save the day.

In their minds, it will not happen to them; it is

a risk worth taking, and the government has their back. Does California come to mind?

So there you have it. Why should a homeowner or insurance company do anything if a never-ending source of money – our money – and resources are held responsible and accountable for protecting and/or replacing their burned structures?

Recognizing this conundrum, I thought maybe it was time to take a different approach and seek some responsibility on behalf of the private sector insurance companies.

Why couldn't those companies put some of the burden of defensible space back on the homeowner in the form of higher premiums – or lower premiums for those who voluntarily practice defensible space mitigations? I offered up my free services to a major home insurer in the Rocky Mountain West. I offered to design and develop assessments or inspection criteria and develop training – PowerPoint presentations – for their local agents, at no cost to them. To me, this would be a significant outreach to thousands of WUI homeowners and could have major impacts on defensible space mitigation in the West.

The company chose to opt out after one consultation. What was their thinking? They must be flush with premium payments, afraid to confront their customers, or know deep-pocketed government ultimately has their back.

For the record, I know of one insurance company that has taken this defensible space requirement approach and reduces premiums for mitigation accomplishments. I know of another company that will not insure in the WUI. For whatever reason, I just believe more can be done in the private sector.

There is one more observation I need to share. Hazard fuel reduction and defensible space mitigation is static. We all know forest fuels and ignition sources accumulate over time. They must be treated annually.

I have witnessed people who cleaned up ignition sources on and around their structures, only to find three years later the structure and immediate area was a total ignition zone disaster area. It's human nature to accumulate and grow "stuff" around the house.

Also, one must consider that residences in the

WUI have a turnover, which means new folks moving in must be educated. Then there is the neighbor who does nothing when others work hard to reduce fuels. Folks have to be educated, accountable, and committed if defensible space is to work.

The same holds true with federal hazard fuel reductions; it is not a one-time, solves-all deal. For example, if current hazard fuels projects considered spotting potential, then we would be looking at timber sales – a.k.a. professional/sustainable forest practices forest wide – and not just next door to homes. It is not just a dead-and-down, limb-it-up issue.

In short, this problem is an "in perpetuity" issue that needs long-term solutions by everyone involved. Shouldn't some of the responsibility lie with the landowner?

I believe the current entitlement syndrome rewards apathy for homeowners. Unfortunately, the wildfire crisis and its associated heroes on cable news continue to convince taxpayers a need for more and more suppression resources. It's big business – just follow the money.

The bottom line is that there is no glory or crisis – and ultimately, no incentives – for practicing defensible space or professional forest management. To do that will require new leadership and statesmanship.

We should recognize that defensible space or structure protection is where the rubber (wildfire) meets the road. That's where homes burn and people die. That's where you find the media.

Fire effects on the forests are not a big issue to most. But any rational firefighter or public land manager knows that defensible space issues are just a symptom of a much larger problem. Throw in misguided forest management (spotted owl), tree-hugger lawsuits, environmental regulations, an addiction for spending and taxing (bigger government), ignorant leadership, clueless people moving into the WUI, and the welcome movement toward socialism to understand the magnitude of the problem.

Bigger government and more spending seem to be the easiest solutions. I must be old fashioned, but one would think that we could spend some of the billions in firefighting funds each year on forest management, an updated 10 a.m. policy (take



the fight to the fire), and a shared responsibility for protecting structures.

It's not hard to visualize the big picture conundrum we have created. But fear not; any politician or academic wonder boy can wrap it up in a trillion-dollar "fix-it-all package" called *stop global warming*. Will that political hoax really make the "burning houses and forest fires" go away?

And for PNF, how about stop playing God;

establish limits on fire duration and require a cost/benefit analysis to keep them in their designated areas? Think of the suppression and structure cost savings from those escaped fires alone. Oh, I forgot ... money is not the issue – or is it?

*Catch-22: A dilemma or difficult circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions.* 🐼

# No Available Resources—It's Time To Review Biscuit Fire

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

For most readers, the Biscuit Fire is just a name that sounds familiar. Now is the time to review this fire, as it might have been the start of what we are now seeing in fighting wildfire and the lack of use of smokejumpers.

In 2002 the Biscuit Fire in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, Siskiyou N.F., burned 500,000 acres and cost multi-millions in suppression expenses. The amount of money spent in post-fire problems has probably gone beyond a billion dollars.

As described by the *Salem Statesman*: "The Kalmiopsis, one of the wildest places in the United States, is a difficult place to fight fires, given its steep terrain, lack of accessibility and occasional high winds known as the Chetco Effect." However, the Siskiyou Smokejumpers covered this area for 38 years squelching would be mega-fires.

Early on, I heard one USFS weather person predict that this fire would burn a half million acres and would go until it snowed. He was spot on. The National Climatic Data Center described conditions in the U.S. at that time: "More than one-third of the 48 contiguous states are now in *severe to extreme drought*. The problem is most acute in the West."

The biggest factor to come up from the ashes was the cover-up by the Forest Service—"no available resources, no smokejumpers available for 48 hours."

After the closing of the Siskiyou Smokejumper

Base (SSB) in 1981, the use of smokejumpers on the Siskiyou N.F. went down. The verbiage at the time was that the Redmond Smokejumpers would handle the area covered by the Siskiyou Smokejumpers. However, during the time period 1981 to 2002, only 24 fires were jumped on the Siskiyou by the RAC smokejumpers. A great example of "out of sight, out of mind."

## The Start—July 13

Friday, July 12, 2002, an evening storm brings more than 600 lightning strikes to the Rogue Valley. Biscuit One and Biscuit Two are located west of O'Brien, Oregon. The Siskiyou Rappelers are in Colorado. The fires are reported at 1200 on July 13. From my notes at the time taken from sources at each base, there were six jumpers at Redding and four at Redmond. The morning report from NIFC at 0800 (MDT) shows 110 jumpers available in the lower 48, plus 127 Type II crews in Redmond/Redding areas. Reminder: Jumpers are supposed to be a National Resource, and jumpers from most bases could reach the Siskiyou in about two hours.

## The Smoke Gets Thicker

In a later article in the *Portland Oregonian*: "(Name withheld), a tall, graying 49-year-old with a bushy mustache and shoulder-length hair, has spent much of his adult life fighting fires. He is a

member of one of the nation's Type I teams, the most seasoned federal fire managers. (Name withheld) asked local fire dispatchers for smokejumpers, an elite crew of backcountry firefighters who parachute into remote forests to attack small fires before they spread. *Dispatchers at Redmond Air Center turned down the request.* The smokejumpers were fighting fires elsewhere in Oregon and the region. None would be available for at least 48 hours."

### **Day Two—What's Going On at Redmond?**

From my sources at Redmond: "On the morning of July 13, 16 jumpers were out on fires, 16 more had jumped fires prior to 12 noon. Only four more had jumped by the end of the day." This comes from RAC and shows the complete opposite of what the USFS was telling the press. There was a constant flow in and out of RAC, which is normal for any smokejumper base. They were never out of smokejumpers!

### **I Don't Believe That Stuff**

First, I went to the Resource Summary from NIFC. It showed at 0800 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the fire (July 14) that there were five jumpers at Redding, 21 at Redmond/NCSB, and a total of 79 in the lower 48. It is getting deeper.

I contacted **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74), veteran smokejumper with over 300 fire jumps, at Redmond. Feedback from Mark: "No SJ's available for 48 hrs.? I doubt there has ever been a span of 48 hrs. during which NO jumpers were available at RAC. Our turnaround times are just too quick. Add to that the fact that there is almost always a source of some boosters available somewhere. Any of the five primary smokejumper aircraft used in the lower 48 can fly from any jump base to Redmond in under two hours. No jumpers available in the lower 48 for 48 hours? Fat chance!"

I asked if there was any way of learning the source of the 48-hour statement? From Mark: "Sounds like the future of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness was determined by an uninformed, stupid, or just plain lazy person. As you said, the requesting agency should have followed through as well. Keep after it, Chuck!"

### **Day Three—July 15**

Resource report shows 76 available smokejumpers in lower 48. Florence Fire is discovered in the Kalmiopsis. USFS Type II crew starts four-hour hike to the fire but stops two miles from the fire. Biscuit Information Officer said, "The crews had to get rest so that the proper ratio of work to rest hours could be maintained." Jeez!

### **Day Four—July 16**

Florence Fire now at 1200 acres. F.S. crew arrived at Florence Fire and sized it up at 1130. Due to the fire activity, they decided not to take action and returned to Pine Flat to set up camp at 1530.

A key point to note here is the result of a quick initial attack on the Carter Fire. No smoke is showing from the Carter Fire that was started at the same time as the Biscuit Fires but manned by two crews. It was contained at 1325 on this day. This is a prime example of what happens with quick IA on a fire vs no or slow action.

I've always had a feeling that many smokejumper requests get derailed somewhere along the line. This started with the Biscuit Fire and seems to have happened in subsequent years. From my notes back in 2002 from a Redmond source: "A side note, the Aircraft Dispatcher at Central Oregon Dispatch told me two days ago that I **would be surprised how many orders for jumpers never get beyond that office.**"

In the years since the Biscuit Fire, I have been trying to counter the line from the USFS about lack of available resources. From newspapers to historians, that is the written story. History is written by those with the biggest mouth and resources. Unfortunately, *Smokejumper* doesn't have the mouth and resources—just the facts.

At this writing—it is almost August—there are months to go in the fire season. Since the closing of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, the Kalmiopsis has been a regular location of multi-million dollar wildfires. The terrain has changed according to the Forest Service and other firefighters. It is now too steep and slippery for the modern day firefighters.

I covered the Chetco Bar Fire in the October 2018 issue of *Smokejumper*. Another fire in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness was started by a lightning



storm on June 25, 2017, but not discovered by the USFS until July 12, 2017. Even at that late date, it was reported at three-fourth of an acre. Rappellers built a helispot but did not go to the fire. They said the ground was “really steep and the Madrone leaves were really slick.” An example of how the hills have gotten steeper and the leaves slicker since they closed the jumper base at Cave Junction. The fire ended up burning 191,090 acres and cost \$61 million. Of course, we know that is just a fraction of the actual costs.

**Quentin Rhoades** (MSO-89) is working with a citizens group from Brookings, Oregon, who experienced property damage from the Chetco Bar Fire. Quentin was on the first load of jumpers at the South Canyon Fire in 1994. He is in the legal profession now and won the Weaver Case in 2011 where a Type I Team burned a family ranch with negligent backfiring operations. I wish him and the Brookings group all the best as their actions might change the way the USFS manages fires.

The damage to the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area since the closing of the Siskiyou Smokejumper

Base has been devastating. One of the most beautiful Wilderness Areas in the U.S. has been reduced to a snag patch.

I look back on the years when we jumped the Kalmiopsis on a regular basis—nothing said—just a normal fire jump. Get it small and put it out. Must be a mindset sort of thing—perception, no TV while growing up. Who knows? I think the hills and valleys are still the same. The trees are still very tall. But, I bet if you attack a fire the first day, instead of waiting twelve days, the fire would still be able to be put out and kept at a single page report.

The Rogue-Siskiyou N.F. has a new Forest Supervisor, Merv George, to whom I’ve been introduced via email by **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65). I hope very much, by the reading of this January 2020 issue, that there is a “new sheriff in town” and the endless string of multi-million dollar fires on the Siskiyou will come to an end. Could Merv be the “Moses” to lead the Forest Service into the “Promised Land?” They have already spent more than 40 years in the desert. 🙏



Found hiking in the Oregon Wilderness July 2017 L-R: Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65), Malcolm Creelman (Assoc.), Lee Gossett (RDD-57), Bob Dayton (MSO-65). (Courtesy Steve Smith)

### **Redmond Smokejumper & Wildland Fire Education Center**

A FEASIBILITY STUDY has been started to determine whether the 5,500-square foot WFE Center, with projected costs of \$5.5 million, can be funded. The cooperative venture includes the USFS, Deschutes County, and the City of Redmond.

Conceptually, the facility would be built on high ground next to the Redmond Air Tanker Base ramp. The two-story building would have a replica of a lookout tower.

Bend and Central Oregon have a high tourist visitation record. This center certainly would be a great addition. Stay tuned for more information as it develops. 🙏

# On The Road To A National Wildfire Agency, Part 1

by J. Jay Jones (Associate)

In 1989 I was hired onto the Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough R.D., as a member of a helitack crew supporting a Bell 212 medium helicopter. During our first week on board, I was told to report to a district-wide orientation briefing where a discussion on that year's budget took place.

The helitack crew, along with the Hotshot crew, district engine crews, and other hand crews, sat in silence as it was explained to us that in order for the district to mitigate the current fiscal-year budget shortfalls for the silviculturalists, the biologists, the hydrologists, and the archaeologists, the fire budget would have to be raided. So we listened as our fire budget was divvied up to support those programs.

The fire crews, it was reasoned, could make up their own resulting budget shortfall by raiding the wildfire superfund after the fire season got going. It was anticipated that they could replace any needed equipment by claiming losses due to destruction on fires. Maintenance of engines would be deferred until fires could pick up the tab. We were assured that the district would get through this budget crisis if fire could manage to do a little creative accounting.

While I might have questioned the strict legality of all this, this wasn't the first time I'd seen this happen. Oh, no! It wasn't the first time, nor the last time it happened. And it wasn't the only forest and not the only agency.

And people who spoke out of line – well, everyone realized that a reduction in force of a single resource could free up \$20,000, or so, in salary in a tight budget environment.

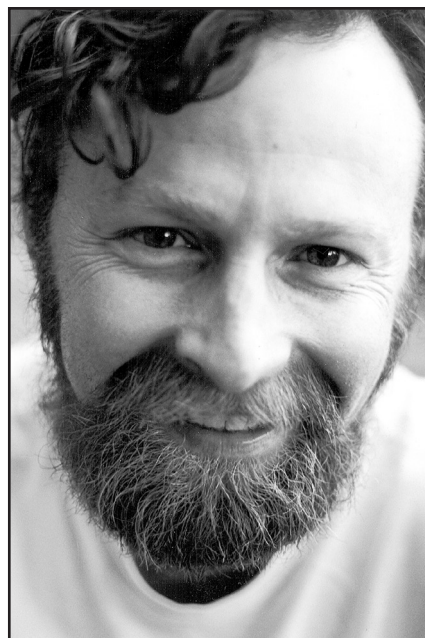
And, of course, any investigation would, quite reasonably, find the guilty parties were primarily within the fire program; the other programs could claim a higher moral ground because they wouldn't be active conspirators in "bending the rules" of fiscal responsibility. But the real salt in

this wound was overhearing people from these programs, throughout that fire season, whispering about "all those Neanderthals in fire." Bailing out their programs and saving their livelihoods didn't earn any respect or gratitude.

That's part of the reason I've been committed in recent decades to discussing, with anyone with even a casual interest, all the problems associated with creating a single wildland firefighting agency. I've continually sought to develop interest in extracting firefighters from agencies with divided loyalties.

Let's begin looking at the current list of co-operators of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group: the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Association of State Foresters, United States Fire Administration, and the Intertribal Timber Council.

The problem with all of them is that they aren't pure wildland fire, but have concurrent missions. Wildland fire is competing, to varying degrees, with other interests within each of these agencies. Fire, however, has something all those other interests want: funding that can draw on further funding during a fire emergency. And funding is



*J. Jay Jones (Courtesy J. Jones)*

at the core of the scramble for the command of fire resources. Not for fire's own sake, but because it has access to funding.

I hope the following story will illustrate some of the difficulties associated with mixed-mission responsibilities. I was hired as a BLM dispatcher in Las Vegas in 1992 and was informed on my arrival that a National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) terminal would soon be installed in dispatch. I would be dispatching not only for fire and aviation, but for law enforcement as well.

This communication center handled some 14 BLM rangers, two Forest Service rangers, and two Nevada Division of Forestry fire marshals. In addition, we often cooperated with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, particularly with their search and rescue team.

About three weeks or so into fire season, a lightning bust rolled over the southern edge of the Spring Mountains on the southwest edge of Las Vegas. Things quickly got busy. We suddenly found ourselves with 25 reported wildfires, and pretty much every firefighter we had was being dispatched.

The radio channels were jammed, and then we were informed that there was a developing incident at a campground that involved weapons; people's lives were at risk. From out of the blue, two ambulances called in, insisting they were responding to our incidents and they needed to pin down which incident they were supposed to respond to. Which one was supposed to go to the campgrounds?

Law enforcement officers on the scene of the campground incident commandeered the primary command net because of the reported weapons use. This was the same net that fire needed for emerging wildfires.

No one in our shop had requested the ambulances and nobody could use the radios to contact those responding units and advise them. This mayhem produced a lot of shock, frustration and anger.

Our attempts at tactical workarounds quickly jammed up all our phone lines, and conflicting requests with cooperating agencies soon created misinformation and confusion over everyone's responsibilities and assignments. There were signifi-

cant delays in getting firefighters sorted out and getting them the support they needed.

That experience, with shutting down a command net at a critical moment in emergency response, left a bitter taste in everyone's mouth. Firefighters had needed more information from dispatch and many individuals resented having their mission brushed aside with what they saw as utter disregard.

Well, you can probably imagine the discussions that fire staff, law enforcement staff, and district management had over how to adjudicate responsibilities and cooperate in their respective missions in the future.

After a few years, the experiment was deemed a failure. Local officials decided that fire and law enforcement needed independent resources dedicated to accomplish their missions; BLM took over NPS fire; NPS took over BLM law enforcement.

Currently, the U.S. Fire Administration is under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security. Based on my own experience, I just don't see how a security agency can possibly give wildland fire the kind of dedication and commitment it needs.

Homeland Security will always be dedicated to security and wildland fire will always be treated as the redheaded stepchild until it is treated equitably – not as a collection of disparate resources, among a dozen agencies with essential different missions, but as an equal partner with its own independent command over dedicated resources, and a budget that can't be poached by associated programs who think of wildland fire as a kind of slush fund.

Currently, the best candidate for forming the core of a National Wildfire Agency is probably the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. There are nearly 700 people on its standing committees, and subcommittees and they are familiar with the needs of the wildland fire community.

Ultimately, it comes down to focus. What does an agency see as its focus? An agency's administrator and its top officials make up their own minds what that agency's focus will be. Creating a new agency dedicated to wildfire incidents will demand a focus from its administrators that can only come from a lifetime of experiences. It is essential that this agency should promote its top



officials from within the wildfire community.

Some wildland firefighters, who have spent a lifetime on the fireline, have memories that give them an unusual focus on their work environment. The sound of a forest crowning is one of them. Some firefighters I have known have described it as some enormous freight train rushing towards them; others have described it as the sound of a great fall of water, like when you come around a bend of some trail and suddenly hear this great weight of water crashing to the earth, dragging a great volume of air behind it.

I've always thought the sound was like a gargantuan aircraft turbine spooling up; it's like some ravenous maw that has the power to devour every tree, rock, or river within the sound of its spinning intake blades, and spit it out through its high-pitched, screaming exhaust.

Once you've heard that sound, once that visceral impact of the unrestrained power of nature on the rampage crawls down your spine and raises the hairs on the back of your neck, you tend to listen to theoretical discussions about wildfire in a new light.

I don't like the idea of some crisis driving political careerists into putting together an ad hoc committee of lawyers and accountants, who have never been on the fire line, and telling this committee of neophytes to decide the fate of wildfire firefighters.

Agencies organized in crisis can't be expected to get things right, especially if they're inexperienced outsiders. Usually, they employ great energy in reorganizing in an attempt to define the problems associated with the crisis, but they are mostly intended to assure taxpayers that leadership is doing something – usually by employing some form of political obfuscation intended to soothe and calm an irate public.

Essentially, that's how the Department of Homeland Security was created. And before that, the United States Fire Administration was driven into creation by similar forces after the 1970 fire season. Its historical record doesn't show an organic evolution of in-house experience from the wildland fire community rising through the ranks of these administrations.

The U.S. Fire Administration, and its division partner, the National Fire Academy, are too

removed from the wildland fire community. Even though the National Fire Academy has a dozen courses in wildland urban interface, I don't believe wildland fire is really in their administration's mindset. Maybe that's unfair, but after having 34 fire seasons in my career, I'll trust my instincts on this one.

Given this state of affairs, wildland firefighters should look to their own resources, people within the community they can trust, to solve our industry's unique problems – especially in the search for operational components to make up a National Wildfire Agency.

Admittedly, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group may not want the job of forming the core of a National Wildfire Agency. Let's face it! This isn't a job for the fainthearted, but there's certainly enough talent available there. It would certainly be a terrifying aspect to anyone who just wants a day job. However, there are always a few people who understand the importance of properly defining an essential mission, and there're few things as essential as an organized fire response.

While the NWCG should certainly remain a central component in the creation of a National Wildfire Agency, I wouldn't suggest an exclusionary mindset. We should use the tools we already have – the personnel who have experience and are already in place at NICC, the GACCs, the NMAC Group.

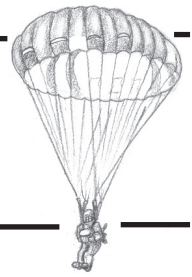
A National Wildfire Agency needs experience and commitment; merit should be the guiding principle, not bureaucratic privilege, political partiality, or pork barrel economics. I suspect that more than just a few would embrace the idea if some realistic proposals were developed from in-house, not imposed by external forces seeking opportunities to slice off some pork for their own purposes.

Realistically speaking, one of the most difficult bureaucratic hurdles will be constructing a continuous rota of billets for policy and command positions in operations, logistics and telecommunications. I'll get to that in Part II. 🔧

*What's coming? Next is a review of some essential elements needed in a National Wildfire Agency.*



# ODDS AND ENDS



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Jack Rose** (MSO-49), **Allen Biller** (FBX-82), **Mike Bina** (MSO-68), **John McMahon** (MSO-58) and **Dave Provencio** (MSO-77) who just became our latest Life Members.

**Ed Smith** (MYC-68): "It was the summer of 1974, and I was smoke-jumping and teaching junior high school social studies. I was supposed to start school, when I heard there was a proficiency jump the next day. I decided to skip the first district morning meeting and make one last jump. When I got dressed to go to the loft instead of school, my wife was furious, to say the least.

"I was the last jumper on a Doug load. I kept looking out the window, and nobody was getting in to the spot. There were several canopies in small trees and brush. All I could think of was how I was going to explain being late to the building meeting in the afternoon. I did not get to the spot either. I did find a dirt road to land on. Didn't cross my mind how hard that road would be. I guess that was payback for not being in school. However, I did make it back to school in time for the afternoon meeting."

**Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59): In another indication of my creeping years, I just got a program from the retirement ceremony of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1989. Capt. Elizabeth A. Thomas, USN, was a Surface Warfare Officer and served on the USS Niagara Falls, USS Ross and USS LaSalle. She later served for the Navy Foreign Area Officer community as a Foreign Area Officer.

Beth was one of my cross country team members at Chico H.S. I really wanted her to do a couple seasons as a Wildland Firefighter. Looks like she made a better choice.

**CIA Budget Document** (6 Jan. 1961): Item 2—Description of Work or Services Required—



World-wide Agency air operations (redacted), Laos, (redacted) are presently being supported in airborne operations by personnel recruited from the United States Forest Service smokejumpers. This program will provide for recruitment, assessment—.

**Michael Steppe** (IDC-61) retired last January after 53 years of being in veterinary practice. Enjoy retirement Mike.

**Karen Weissenback Moen**: "Here is the information about interment of Edward's remains. The transfer will take place at the headquarters of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency in Hawaii on September 16, 2019.

"Interment with military honors as he served in an airborne division of the U.S. Army in 1965-66 and was deployed to Vietnam.

When: Friday, June 5, 2020

Time: 11:00 AM

Where: Eagle Point National Cemetery, Eagle Point, Oregon

For further information contact Karen Weissenback Moen at [moen\\_karen@yahoo.com](mailto:moen_karen@yahoo.com)

"We are designing a ceremony that we hope will be filled with some symbolism as well as a chance for family and friends to come together including colleagues from Air America and the Smokejumper community. As of now, members of the Townley and Ritter families also plan to attend as Air America #293 families remain close. Any colleagues and friends of Edward's are invited to attend."

*Ed was killed December 23, 1971, when his Air America C-123 was shot down in Laos. (Ed.)*

**Ted Stubblefield** (USFS Ret.): "Check this fire out (AZ) on Inciweb. The USFS states they are 'managing it.' Fire went from 15 to 150 acres in one day, 1,100 acres two days later, and now, a week later, it's at 4300 acres. Here we are in late August with 90-95 degree temps and moderate

winds. Smoke is filling all of Prescott Valley.

"This area is filled with older demographics, and lots of folks have allergy issues, thus breathing problems already. Sometimes, I'm just not sure what the USFS is thinking. Their assessment is myopic at best."

Update a day later: "This is the same Ranger District on the Prescott NF that chose to do a 'managed fire' last year during a complete shut-down. I mean residents of Prescott could not use any BBQ devices that 'created ash,' yet the USFS could choose to play with fire during hot-test period of the year.

"Two or three possibilities cross my mind: The FMO and DR are completely ignorant about fire behavior; the Forest Supervisor is asleep at the switch or they are experimenting due to their own lack of fire experience? It's baffling, and quite honestly, it's embarrassing."

The **Mountain Fire** broke out at noon Aug. 22 and by 2:40 p.m. was 600 acres. Very high burning conditions, temps in range of 100+. Here's how Cal Fire "managed" the fire: 79 engine companies, 28 fire crews, 4 helicopters, 12 bulldozers and 10 air tankers. By evening they had 20% containment, by morning 40%. Does this tell you that we should not stop fighting fire when the sun goes down?

**Paradise High School** was one of the few structures not destroyed last Nov. in the Camp Fire. The Bobcats have traditionally had one of the top large-school football teams in our North Section and have won several championships. They open their season tonight (9/23) with a lot of fanfare. Normally a squad of nearly 60 players, they will suit up 35 for the game this evening.

Aaron Rodgers, from Chico and Green Bay Packer QB, bought the team new helmets. Spirit is high in the community—the stands will be packed. Even though they are a much smaller school now, their kids still have that high level athletic ability and coaching.

A much smaller school from a farming community, Williams, was scheduled to be their opponent. I wondered how that arrangement came about—giant athletic apparel company Under Armor stepped in and paid Williams \$5,000 worth of gear to play. Wow, I thought, Williams is really going to pay for this one. I predict a

30-0 game—will continue tomorrow morning and see how close I come

Saturday morning: Paradise scored on first two possessions and took a 42-0 win, but it was good for the community.

**Brian Kopka** (MSO-95) lost everything in the Camp Fire: house, business equipment. Thought I'd check in and see how he is doing and if the NSA can be of further help.

"The crazy thing is the house we bought was my parent's house that we thought was lost in the fire. All the structures to the left of my parent's house were lost. Miraculously, firefighters were able to save this house. I found evidence of where they kicked open the gate and put out spot fires in the back yard.

"My folks went through an extremely emotional period. All of their friends lost homes and they were the only ones left. So they put their house on the market, and we ended up with it. They moved to Florence, Oregon.

"I've just been working locally, still operating the grapple truck. I ended up working a full six months, 10-12 hour days 5-6 days a week on the tree debris cleanup for the PGE contract. It was good for me go right back to work after the fire, kept my mind off the emotional loss. It's still affecting us, but we have a very nice home and some normality now.

"Once they let us back into Paradise around the end of December, we were able to dig through the rubble of our house. It took me about four attempts of digging and sifting in my bedroom area. I was able to find my Rookie Pin, my 50 or 100 jump pin, and a limited-edition Ruana Smokejumper knife I bought back in '97—pretty tough pins to survive that heat.

"Thank you very much, Chuck, for all that you've done and helping out the Bro's and Sisters in the jump world. It was humbling that day you gave me the check from the NSA. I'm proud to be a part of such a awesome group of people."

**Bozeman Chronicle** (8/27/19): West Yellowstone Smokejumper Base—The USFS plans to invest \$1.2 million in the smokejumper base but will end its airtanker service. **Billy Bennett** (WYS-98), who manages the base, said there are types of airtankers (other than jets) that function well at WYS.



**Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77) is out in the field a lot, and his recent email echoes one of the biggest problems I hear about the current USFS—they are no longer in the forest.

“I stopped to see the Redfeather R.S. on the Roosevelt NF on my way home from Fort Collins. I took some pictures and computer enhanced them to make the station look better than it actually is. Note the worn sign. They couldn’t even cut the grass and brush away from the sign. I wanted to go get some paint and stain and start a maintenance makeover.

“There is one general store and one cafe in Redfeather. At the store I asked who the district ranger was. They didn’t know. The owner said that a ranger stopped in last year and introduced himself, but no one came by this year. The ranger station is about a 1/2 mile from the store and cafe.”

**Gary “Pops” Johnson** (FBX-74) forwarded a BLM Smokejumper job description from 1974 that included the following: “Person is subject to hazards from extreme fire behavior, black and grizzly bears, mosquitoes so numerous and miserable that they cannot be described on paper, and off-duty recreation is confined to card playing and story telling.” Pops says he is the oldest Deputy Sheriff in Bonner County (ID) and works pretty much year-round.

**Ernie Hartley** (MSO-62): “Chuck—your article (July, 2019) on the 2017 Lolo Peak Fire made me mad. Mad at the incompetent management practices of USFS, apparently based on a lack of knowledge of both traditional fire suppression practices and of smokejumper capability. You pointed out that smokejumpers have successfully jumped on other fires in the past in that same area and controlled fires while still small.

“Thanks for your article. I read it to my wife last night and she asked if the *Smokejumper* magazine gets mailed to USFS Administrative offices throughout the country?

“I don’t know the NSA policy on distribution of the mag, but I do think staff and administrative personnel could learn a thing or two from those of us who have **put out** the nation’s forest fires. Every issue of *Smokejumper* documents our members’ personal experiences and how difficulties are confronted and brought under control. Keep up the good work!”

Larry Smith with donation in honor of Ron Stoleson (MSO-56): “My condolences to Ron Stoleson’s family. I met Ron under not good circumstances. I was the District Ranger at Moose Creek R.S. on August 4, 1959. Ron was the spotter on the Tri-motor that crashed that day. My bride of one month was one of the two ladies comforting and caring for the injured.” 🕊

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## THE OREGON WILDFIRE RESPONSE COUNCIL—A CHANGE COMING?

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*On January 30, 2019, Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed an executive order creating the Governor’s Council on Wildfire Response. One of the areas of consideration: Prevention, treatment and cost containment of wildfires.*

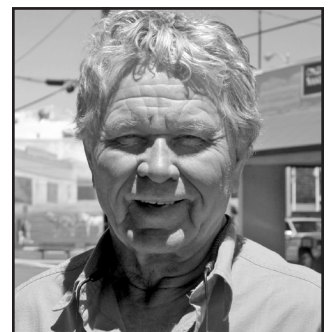
*Murry Taylor (RDD-65) has been very active in the push to return to quick initial attack and put these fires out. He attended an 8/15/19 meeting of this committee and actually got some minutes of their time to speak.*

*I’m going to condense Murry’s notes from that meeting—this is important stuff. (Ed.)*

**From Murry:** Oregon is a small state (4.5 million people) and is fairly agile politically.

The timber industry is still strong in Oregon, sees the F.S. as having burned a lot of their land. The industry has demonstrated its ability to adapt and change and influence state politics.

The people in Western Oregon are MAD AS



Murry Taylor (Courtesy M. Taylor)

HELL. This is due to the hundreds of millions of tourist/agriculture/health dollars lost due to the big fires in '17 and '18. Three hundred Oregonians went to the capital in Salem earlier in the summer and made it clear that they wanted something done.

**The Meeting**—Like all these meetings dealing with environmental issues, the one in Salem took a lot of patience, listening, and mental note taking. The bad news is that—it appears to me—the scope of the council is getting too broad.

The good news is that **Jim Klump** (RDD-64) went along with me and that gave us time to catch up and discuss fire matters beforehand.

**Recommendations**—That from now on, when a Type 1 or Type II Incident Mgmt. Team comes in to take over a fire on federal (read Forest Service) land in Oregon, representatives from ODF, the State Fire Marshall's Office, and local wildfire people will meet with them and discuss the issue of □ig boxes, □the slack-off and back-off actions, and allowing wildfire to do the work of prescribed fire.

That these same people meet at the end of the incident for After Action Reviews to see how closely the recommendations were followed.

**More from Murry:** There are many issues to deal with here. But, if the main issue of fire suppression is not dealt with successfully, all these other things will lose traction and die for lack of interest. If the skies of Western Oregon become smokey later this summer, next summer, or the summer after that, this Council—no matter all the hard work done—could be seen as a failure.

That would be a shame. So I want to speak to the Suppression part of this group. Most of these big fires did not need to happen. The Biscuit Fire, the Silver Complex, the Chetco Bar, and the Taylor/Klondike Fires DID NOT NEED TO HAPPEN. They all happened because they were allowed to burn too long with insufficient initial attack actions.

This is true for many Forest Service fires, not just here in Oregon but where I live on the Klamath N.F. and the rest of the west as well. All the fires I've mentioned could have been put out by smokejumpers. I was one for 27 years so know this is true. For reasons too complicated to go into here, the Forest Service has been seriously remiss in its' use of smokejumpers

to put out these fires when they're small.

Part of the problem is that there's this idea that wildfire should be allowed to burn to reduce forest fuels, in other words to do the work of prescribed fire. In practice this idea has been a huge disaster. The fires have burned vast areas—a fourth of the Klamath N.F. in the last 10 or so years. It can't go on.

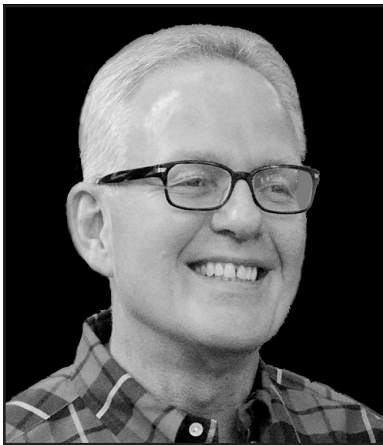
Another problem is that when jumpers are ordered, all too often regional dispatchers (Geographic Area Coordination Centers) tell the ordering party that □here are no jumpers available.□The National Smokejumper Association has followed up these claims and found them (mostly) to be false. It is no exaggeration to say that there are always some jumpers available. There are 370 in the Western U.S., and they're always some that can respond from one of the seven bases in the west.

So, recommend that you attempt—thru the influence of the Governor's Office—to insist the Forest Service in Oregon adopt a policy that all fires must be staffed by noon the day following the day they are detected. If they don't have the resources to do this (which I believe they will claim), then they need to call for the smokejumpers. If adopted, this policy would result in huge reductions in fire size, smoke, and the money spent. For example: Merv George Jr. (Forest Supervisor on the Rogue River—Siskiyou N.F.) told me that his forest spent \$500 million on their fires in '17 and '18.

It would be essential for these same national forests to keep accurate records on how much money is saved by putting out fires when small. Then down the road, five years or so, they could show they saved hundreds of millions and then ask Congress for a fourth of that back for their prescribed fire programs. The current tendency to avoid aggressive initial attack, claiming safety concerns and that the country is □oo steep and too rough,□will only result in the continued destruction of our national forests.

That's what I told the meeting. Who knows if it will get any traction? Ken Cummings, of Hancock Forestry in Medford, is the main guy for the Suppression group. We've met and Chuck Sheley met with him as well. Who knows how this will all turn out? One thing I'm convinced of: There are lots of you out there doing a little here, a little there, and it's bound to make a difference. 🌲

# Smoke From Wildland Fires: Impacts To Public Health



by **Michael T. Rains**  
(Associate)

SINCE RETIRING FROM the U.S. Forest Service in 2016, after almost 50 years of public service, I have written extensively about the need for aggressive forest management to ensure effective fire management. My focus has been on the health and resiliency of forests so fires can become smaller and less intense.

Lately, the impacts of smoke from these wildfires on people's health has become a dominating concern for me, as well. The goal of this column is to highlight this concern.

According to the U.S. Climate and Health Alliance, "... wildfire smoke is primarily made of carbon dioxide, water vapor, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, hydrocarbons and other organic chemicals, nitrogen oxides, and many other trace elements."

Of these pollutants, "particulate matter" (PM) is the

most concerning, given their very small size and ability to be inhaled deeply into the lungs.

And, PM – fine, inhalable particles – is associated with increased mortality and morbidity rates from wildfire smoke. One-twentieth of a width of a human hair, PM from smoke gets into your eyes, respiratory system or bloodstream. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, numerous scientific studies have linked long-term PM exposure to a variety of problems, including cancer, stroke, irregular heartbeat and heart attacks, and respiratory problems, such as irritation of the airways, coughing or difficulty breathing.

People with asthma, heart or lung diseases, children, and older adults are the most likely to be affected by this particle pollution exposure. It should also be noted that, while science-based studies are inconclusive, frequent exposure to smoke for brief periods might also cause long-term health effects. "Death can occur within days or weeks among the most vulnerable following heavy smoke exposure," said Linda Smith, Branch Chief of the California Air Resources Board's Health and Exposure Assessment Section.

According to atmospheric researchers, "The scope of the problem is immense: Over the

next three decades, more than 300 counties in the West will see more severe smoke waves from wildfires, sometimes lasting weeks longer than in years past." An obvious and immediate concern should be the vulnerability of the first responders, our wildland firefighters.

James Crooks, a health investigator at National Jewish Health, concludes, "Smoke from wildfires was once considered a fleeting nuisance except for the most vulnerable populations. But it's now seen in some regions as a recurring and increasing public health threat."

In a 2017 study by Jeffrey Pierce, increases in wildfire-specific PM may alter the "health burden" on the U.S. population. Specifically, as America's population is expected to decline between 2000 and 2100, the mortality attributable to wildfire smoke is expected to triple between now and the end of the century – from as much as 25,000 to about 75,000 deaths per year. More conservative estimates show this range to be from about 15,000 to 44,000 annual deaths.

The rate of increased mortality due to wildfire smoke is the same, about three times the current rate if things do not change. Let there be no doubt, smoke from wildfires is



a killer – far more than most have ever considered until now.

Frustrated by the lack of forest management and the associated increases in wildfires, I once said in corresponding to a colleague, “One day 100 people are going to be killed in a wildfire and then we will begin to listen and things will change.”

I was wrong. The Camp Fire wiped away the town of Paradise, Calif., in November 2018, killing 88 people directly. Unfortunately, that event has become a distant memory in far too many minds.

I wonder if I said, “75,000 people may die this year due to inhalation of wildfire smoke,” would forest management then become a priority in our country? So, fires could eventually become smaller, less intense, and actually be used as a landscape conservation tool.

Smoke from wildfires does not stay in place. According to a recent July 2019 post in *Wildfire Today*, “Wildfires in Alaska and Ontario are creating large quantities of smoke that is affecting not only those areas but Yukon, British Columbia, Quebec, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and the Midwestern states. As practitioners of landscape conservation, we must keep this in mind: “Wildfires threaten some lives directly [see my note about Paradise, Calif.], and wildfire smoke can affect us all.”

The people in the western part of the United States are especially vulnerable. While overall air quality has im-

proved in our country over the past 30 years, wildfire-prone states in the West illustrate a glaring exception; their air quality is actually getting worse. Wildfire smoke is being identified as the culprit because air samples from the West show high levels of organic materials in the particulate matter. Treatment costs for victims at some local hospitals have tripled.

At my final National Leadership Council meeting with the Forest Service in Washington, D.C., former Chief Tom Tidwell spoke so forcefully and eloquently about the need for immediate change in the way we manage wildland fire. That is, the way we assess risk and exposure for our fire responders and the role of fire in addressing the health and resiliency of our forests and landscapes.

Tidwell concluded, “... I do not care what it takes. We will not have another year like we had in 2015.” That year there were 13 firefighter fatalities that led to the chief’s declaration.

No one mentioned the estimated 15,000 deaths due to wildfire smoke. Arguably, every fire season since that statement was made has been worse. It is now time to bring this to light and do something to stop the carnage.

Recently, a very well-respected colleague stated: “By current lack of direction or funding to address the above crisis [wildfires and their impacts on the land and people] – yes, “crisis” by anyone’s

standards – neither politicians, administrations, nor agency leadership ‘give a rip’ about what lies ahead for all Americans. We saw a relatively small example of this with the 2018 Camp Fire that totally wiped out the town of Paradise.

“Yes, some have stated clearly what the problem is, but such calls for action have fallen on deaf ears. Some say it is too late to ward off or salvage this massive dilemma, while others continue to seek a government wake-up call.”

As I have stated often, it is time for *A Call to Action* that reaches out to our citizenry, addressing this national crisis. We must have an unprecedented long-term national commitment. In my letter to President Trump on June 19, 2018, I said: “How many more reasons does it take before we can begin to improve America’s forests so fires can be used as a conservation tool and no longer feared for their destruction? We need your administration to act.”

United States taxpayers are losing \$70 billion to \$350 billion a year in wildfire-related damages to infrastructure, natural resources and public health. If not us, who speaks for the dead and dying?

Far too many extraordinary firefighters and ordinary citizens have perished – directly and indirectly – from wildfires and smoke. It did not have to happen. Lack of forest management is the primary culprit. Now is the time to stand together and call for change. We know what to do. 🔥

# Hey—Anyone Awake Out There?

by Youmus B. Chitenmee (Citizen)

**A**s I said in prior issues of *Smokejumper*, I'm from Washington, D.C., and really don't know anything about wildfire. I did two excellent interviews for you readers. Last January I sat down with Wilford (call me Smoke) E. Baer and really got an education.

Then in the April issue, I had a chance to talk to his identical twin brother, Booger Baer. Remember, Booger is the dark side of the family and had a history of starting fires—has been at it for centuries.

Anyway, I only heard from one person—is anyone alive out there, let alone awake? There certainly are no Alfred E. Neuman fans in the crowd—"What, Me Worry?" Since they don't print *Mad Magazine* anymore, Alfred has decided to go into Initial Attack on Wildfire. He didn't have to modify his legendary motto much—just tweaked it a bit to "What, Me Hurry?"

**Karl Brauneis**, after reading the January issue, let me know he almost fell off his chair laughing while having coffee. I find it hard to believe that because Karl always drinks his coffee while on his favorite horse.

In any case, I'm still out here in the West trying to learn more about wildfire and why you folks are content to breathe smoke three months a year. I thought I was out of touch in D.C., but you people make me feel at home.

I know you might laugh at me for not knowing much about the west and wildfire. Just to show you that I'm a regular guy, I'm running a picture of myself with this column. You can see that I'm pretty squared away—notice the threads and tie—could actually pass as one of your congresspersons except I really want to do something about wildfire.

Don't take me for a wimp—I could hold my own with the smokejumpers in one of those bar



*Youmus B. Chitenmee*

fight in Silver City against the cowboys. Once I heard about smokejumpers, I wanted to join the outfit, but at 255 pounds, they said I would just be another cloud of dust. Well, so much for my dream.

After a year out here I've developed a chronic cough—my Doctor gives me a name that I can't pronounce and tells me it is from the inhalation of substances that injure the lungs. I always have a tough time listening to him, as he is hard to understand

behind the air pollution facemask he wears. He wanted to know if I worked in the coal mines in West Virginia, but I told him I was just a common citizen from Washington D.C. The pollution back there was handled with rubber boots and not a facemask.

By the time you read this, I hope to have survived another summer in the west under the clouds of smoke. The big advantage is that it cuts down on skin cancer.

There a few things I don't understand about you westerners. When I was in elementary school, I learned that we have what is called the U.S. Congress, and it is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. What an idea those guys came up with years ago. Each state gets two representatives in the Senate. The House of Representatives has 435 members based on the population of each state—Amazing!

You have 14 Senators and over 90 Representatives from the western states that burn each summer. Yet, I don't hear anything about them solving the wildfire situation or even coming up with ideas. All they want to do is throw more money at the problem.

Oh well, they fit just fine in D.C. with the rest of us who don't know much about wildfire. 🍷

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# If It Could Go Wrong, It Did

by Mark Romey (Missoula '75)

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This jump was supposed to be just a nice and pleasant two-jumper fire with me and my good friend **Bruce “Mooseling” Ford** (MSO-75). It was small – the Cedar Ridge Fire, in the Bitterroot Selway Wilderness. I was on board along with “Mooseling,” **John Ford** (LGD-74), **Ron McGinnis** (MSO-68), spotter **Larry Fite** (MSO-60), and spotter trainees **Greg Houska** (MSO-69) and “Wild” **Bill Yount** (MSO-69).

The pilot was Doug Devereaux; I’m not sure who the co-pilot was. We were flying in a DC-3 owned by Chrysler Air.

I was “first man in the door” and as we were circling the fire, Fite was showing me the jump spot and the way to pack out.

The left engine started to sputter, then quit. Fite ran up to the pilot, and then the right engine started to sputter. Fite told us to hook up for an emergency jump. He was going to kick us out over a small meadow.

After a few minutes, while I could barely stay in the plane due to all the bodies piled up against me, Fite told us to get on the floor into crash position because “we were going in” to a meadow. We were coasting down the drainage on one engine.

As we landed, I was the farthest in the rear by the door. I yelled out, “There’s a cabin and another one.”

We were at Moose Creek and none of us knew that’s where we were headed. When we stopped, we all jumped out, relieved ourselves under the wing, and were chattering like a bunch of magpies. I am sure the DC-3 would not have made it if not for Fite’s knowledge of the country and his directions to the pilot. The pilot was looking for a lake to ditch in before Fite intervened.

After almost two hours, another DC-3 from Chrysler came in to pick us up, with one engine smoking. We were not exactly crazy about getting into it.

After a while we were above the fire once more. Fite asked me if I saw the jump spot. I answered, “That little meadow.” Fite smiled and said, “Yeah, that meadow.”

I was soon to find out that when jumping without glasses, all patches of 10-foot alder look like meadows. He threw the streamers and Bruce and I followed. We didn’t care how much drift there was; we were getting out of the DC-3. We wished the rest of the folk good luck.

Well, not only did we land in 10-foot alder, but our gear and cargo chute treed up in a huge spruce “school marm” that split 30 feet up. I tried my hand at climbing up the limby monster, but after a half-hour of trying, came back to earth for a disappointing breather.

Bruce then gave it a shot. He got to the cargo just before dark and lowered it with his letdown rope. It was still 20 feet off the ground. Bruce let it rip. As luck had it, poor Bruce spurred himself pretty badly – he should’ve had stitches but I forgot my sewing kit.

The next day we decided that neither of us was going back up for the chute. Both of us eyed the saw, and then eyed each other. We took the saw and felled that limby monster and recovered the chute. We carefully covered the stump so the detection flight wouldn’t see it.

The logs we had to buck on the fire were almost as wide as the saw. There was about two inches left on the saw when we were sawing through the logs. It took us forever bucking. Needless to say, we did put out the fire and prevented havoc in the wilderness.

That night, as we worked the fire, we had the usual smokejumper discussion on the philosophy of life. We talked about our new man class of two years prior and at first both agreed we were the handsomest and most skilled class ever. Then reality hit; our thought was shattered when Bruce reminded us that **George Weldon** (MSO-75) and **Jim Beck** (MSO-75) were in the class. So much for handsomeness.

The packout was another fiasco. The map we were given had us incorrectly spotted. We were to cross-country to a ridge and catch the trail. The problem was that we were two steep ridges over. We were packing all our equipment. This added a day.

Poor Bruce took a headfirst fall down a steep



slope and was almost beaten to death with the shovel. I was praying that I wouldn't have to quarter him and pack him out before we made it to Elk Summit. His arm also went to sleep from those comfortable army pack boards. It didn't wake up for a week.

We were finally picked up and taken back to Mis-

soula. On the way we stopped at Lolo Hot Springs for a burger and, to the driver's dismay, a beer. While we were emptying the last of the beer, Bruce said, "It can't get any worse than that jump."

That was hell. Bruce and I just had a beer reminiscing about that jump from almost 30 years ago. 🕒

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## BLAST FROM THE PAST

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by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)  
*The Daily Missoulian*  
October 26, 1942

### Dr. Leo Martin killed by crash of trainer plane

WALLA WALLA, WASH. — Captain L.P. Martin, 39, of Missoula, Mont., and his pilot instructor were killed last night in the crash of a commercial cabin trainer plane near here. The instructor was V.W. Bilderback, about 32, of Marshfield, Ore.

Striking a power line, the Martin Flying School plane crashed in flames, witnesses said. Officials at Martin School said trees apparently obscured the power line and the gasoline tanks exploded when the ship hit the line. Captain Martin was a physician at the Walla Walla Army air base.

#### Wife witnessed crash

Mrs. Martin, the former Bernice Hagens of Missoula, and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. G.J. Hagens, 233 University Avenue, witnessed the accident that took Dr. Martin's life, it has been learned here. They were among the spectators



who saw the plane, practicing simulated forced landings, strike the power line and crash in flames. Mrs. Martin turned to her parents and said, "I hope Leo wasn't in that plane."

Minutes afterward, they were told that he had been. The pilot was killed instantly, and Dr. Martin died a few minutes later.

Dr. Martin was a prominent and popular physician in Missoula from the time he came here in 1939 until he left the city last July to enter the service as a flight surgeon. He was head flight surgeon at the Walla Walla Army base.

Graduated from Creighton University in Omaha 15 years ago, Dr. Martin had practiced in Nebraska and at Philipsburg before coming here.

A man of rugged physique

and interested in aeronautics, Dr. Martin became nationally prominent when he took parachutist instruction under the direction of Forest Service jumper Frank Derry (MSO-40) in 1940. His training was soon put to practical purposes when he flew into remote regions to take assistance to injured persons, chief among whom was Barbara Streit, who, only a year ago, was shot while on a hunting trip in the primitive area of the South Fork, and so critically injured that her life was despaired of for many weeks.

On this occasion Dr. Martin was flown to the Big Prairie region and then trekked into the mountains for more than 20 miles to give the injured girl first aid and a blood transfusion, which was later credited with saving her life.

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

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# Some Observations On Firefighting In The 21st Century—Let's Not Nitpick Assumptions Here

by Ted Stubblefield (Associate)

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**B**rush fires, large and small, will always be with us. There is just no way around that fact.

Timber fires will grow larger, primarily due to lack of “forest management” among the federal agencies. Such fires will be significantly larger than recent recorded history. This is due to a lack of clear straightforward leadership by all agencies to do what is required and absolutely necessary with forest management to reduce and break up continuous landscapes of dead and dying forests.

No administration has stepped forward in the last three decades with a clear decision to alter the ongoing desecration of America's forests. The politics of “caring for the land” are alive and at full throttle with analysis, but little action. All new strategies must be measured ultimately by the end result, or lack thereof.

Estimates by then Agriculture Sec. Tom Vilsack (D-Iowa) put at-risk forests acreage at 45 million to 60 million; more recent estimates put those figures at 70 million to 75 million acres.

Problem: By current lack of direction or funding to address the above crisis – yes, “crisis” by anyone's standards – neither politicians, administrations, nor agency leadership “give a rip” about what lies ahead for all Americans. We saw a relatively small example of this with 2019's Camp Fire that virtually wiped out the town of Paradise, Calif.

Yes, some groups – such as the National Association of Forest Service Retirees – have stated clearly what the problem is, but such calls for action have fallen on deaf ears. Some say it is too late to ward off or salvage this massive dilemma, while others continue to seek a “government wake-up call.”

Problem: National Fire Strategies are in conflict, as some say, or misguided, as others say. In either case, this begs the question of whether or not there is a clear commitment to put out wildland fires (without jeopardizing appropriate prescribed burns during less risky times of the year when they can be deployed).

Problem: Experimentation by administrations that come and go every four years. Yes, this is a huge problem of inconsistency with direction to dependent agencies (U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management). No one is “on the same page” of direction.

Administrations and agencies are toying with American treasures – forests and rangelands – as if they are “risk-neutral” opportunities for experimentation. And, while seemingly trying to save lives on the fireline, they simultaneously direct the loss of thousands of acres of watershed and natural resources, while allowing fires to grow ever larger and thus more dangerous to human life. Think that one through for a minute.

What can be done at this juncture while our government allows the constant loss of our natural resources? Do politicians simply not care about such apparent “mundane values” as natural resources? Are agency administrators without the will and determination to stand before Congress and clearly state this pending disaster?

A leader is not a leader without the commitment to “fall on their sword” to state the truth, when and where it counts most. Yes, this means giving congressional testimony even without “speech review by the administration.” Some may recall the former USFS Chief Jack Ward Thomas doing so. He cared not that he might be fired that same day. Where is such a leader today?

We need a cohesive multi-agency strategy with teeth and clear direction, as well as a prioritized budget to “get ‘er done” – as those of us who really care, often say. 🙏

*Ted spent 38 years with the USFS and is a graduate of Humboldt State University with a BS in Forest Management. He was on a Type I team with Dave Nelson, was Forest Supervisor on the Olympic N.F., and retired in 1999 as Forest Supervisor on the Gifford Pinchot N.F. It is a pleasure to have “Stubb” submit his ideas on current forest management.*



# SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

## Investigative Journalism—Gone— What Happened To *The Missoulian*?

IN THE APRIL 2018 issue of *Smokejumper*, Ben Smith (MSO-64) gave an excellent recounting of the Whetstone Ridge Fire that later combined with the Myers Fire and burned over 62,000 acres and cost millions. The Whetstone Fire started July 13, 2017 when there were 17 jumpers at Missoula. However it was about 23 hours later when the first ground troops got to the fire.

The Myers Fire started July 14, 2017. There were 13 jumpers available at Missoula on July 15—guessing about the same number the day before. In any case, you have to remember that there are also other jumper bases within a

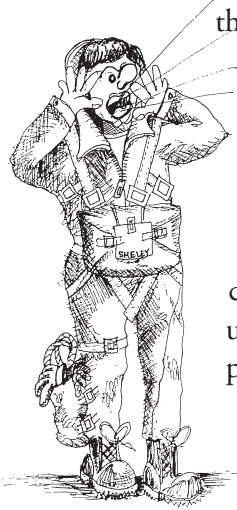
quick flying distance of these fires.

The Lolo Peak Fire (54,000 acres, \$48.4 million, one fatality) started July 15 when there were 13 jumpers at Missoula. In the Oct. 2019 issue of *Smokejumper*, I did a piece about the Lolo Fire and how it didn't have to happen.

One of our Montana readers thought the local area public should be able to get this information. The *Ravalli Republic*, which is owned by the *Missoulian*, would not take the article as an op-ed, and we had to run it as a "paid advertisement." That probably cost us a lot of readers—Paid Advertisement vs op-ed page.

I've been trying to get that piece run in the *Missoulian* but have not had any luck. People who live in these areas affected by months of smoke should know that these fires could have been put out in their early stages. It is obvious that the USFS did not intend to put these fires out but, instead, treated them as managed fires.

Please read **Michael Rains** article in this issue to get a view into the "Impacts To Public Health." Managed fires might meet the number of annual burned acres needed by



the-USFS, but at a tremendous cost to public health.

Ben Smith contacted *Missoulian* Staff Writer Rob Chaney in April 2018 concerning the Whetstone Ridge Fire: "Rob—I am checking to see if you have an update for me on what you plan to do with the information I have sent to you.

I have received many positive comments on my *Smokejumper* magazine article."

Reply: "Hello Ben—A colleague and I are reviewing a large number of fire incident reports looking for how the Forest Service decision-making process works and how that matches what they tell the public. The process takes time and has to be completed along (with) a number of other responsibilities."

It's been well over a year and Ben has never heard back. This fits the pattern that I've encountered with several newspapers going all the way back to the Biscuit Fire (500,000 acres) in 2002. The newspapers do not want to buck the agencies. The USFS says there are "no resources available" and that satisfies the public. However, there are resources available and they are not being used.

The following from **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) gives insight as to what has hap-



pened at the *Missoulian*: “The *Missoulian* is not the quality newspaper it was as recently as a year ago. Over the past three or four years, the *Missoulian* has gone through several different publishers and editors—probably the same situation for their Editorial Board. It is sad, but the days of professional investigative reporting, like that by the *Missoulian*, that exposed the Bitterroot clear-cutting situation back in the 1970s is history. That and the simultaneous reporting done back east on the Monongahela NF at the same time changed forestry harvesting practices permanently in the FS.”

Although not dealing with the newspaper side of this story, **Dick Rath** (MSO-73), who has had a lot of time in fire, offered the following to help explain why lightning-struck

snags go to multi-million dollar fires: Unfortunately, we are no longer dealing with a Forest Service of the 1960s 70s, 80s or early 90s. The FS of today is staffed with a generation that did not come up through the ranks and earn the positions that many of them fill today. They care little for those that came behind and display a certain amount of contempt for us old duffers—the old duffers that would hold their feet to the fire.

In '94 or '95, the Forest Service conducted a personnel buyout of 10,000 employees. In doing so, sold out the agency by shedding the ranks of persons in all of the various resource disciplines who had a Ph.D. in Forest Service culture and tradition. This move gutted the FS culture, and those that filled vacancies were not

of the same merit as those that came before them.

The skill set of that new generation in FS leadership positions was displayed by the decision made on the fire at Lolo Peak, and I suspect many others. Unfortunately, I know how the agency can ‘weasel word’ their way out of the tough situation and wait for the political fires to die down—then forget the issue.”

With the exception of a couple major newspapers, investigative journalism is gone. Also absent is any accountability by USFS personnel for these fires that could have been put out in their early stages.

As Smokey says, only you can prevent forest fires. Smokey’s twin brother, Booger, from the dark side of the family, can now sit back and laugh at the naivety of his brother. 🐼

## Hawaii’s Medical-Aid-In-Dying Law Eases Former Jumper’s Anxiety

by Brittany Lyte, Honolulu Civil Beat

**O**n Sunday, May 5, **Steve Johnson** (CJ-62) shaved, showered and donned his finest aloha shirt. Then he drank a lethal cocktail prescribed by his doctor and prepared by his wife.

Within minutes the 75-year-old terminal cancer patient slipped into eternal sleep in his home in Kona, Hawaii. His death was the second in Hawaii under the state’s new assisted-suicide law, following the April death of a 73-year-old man who suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

“It’s a tragedy,” said Kathy Johnson, Steve

Johnson’s wife of 44 years. “But for a little bit of the tragedy, Steve got to write his own script.”

So in January, Steve Johnson opted to exert a degree of control over his looming end of life by becoming one of the first Hawaii residents to employ [the state’s new medical-aid-in-dying law](#).

The law, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2019, establishes a terminally ill patient’s right to request from his or her doctor a prescription drug that will cause the patient to die in his or her sleep.

Hawaii’s law includes some of the strictest

qualifying rules in the nation. It is the only state that requires patients to undergo a mental competency exam. And while other states require a two-week minimum waiting period between the time a patient requests the drug from his doctor and the time at which the doctor gains the legal authority to write the prescription, Hawaii's law mandates a minimum waiting period of three weeks.

These and other safeguards are intended to ensure that a patient is clear about his or her decision to die by a means other than natural causes. But some medical professionals have criticized the measures as overkill.

Dr. Charles Miller, a medical-aid-in-dying advocate on Oahu, said his employer, Kaiser Permanente Hawaii, has documented three patients who did not survive the mandatory waiting period, dying of their disease before they could qualify to participate in the program.

"It's a bummer," Miller said. "I see people in really bad shape in their homes (seeking) this prescription and you know they aren't going to make it."

Miller said that just having the medication in their possession has given some of these terminally ill patients a boost in mood and energy, presumably because it provides them with some relief to know that they can choose to ingest the drug if the dying process becomes intolerable.

The biggest problem with the program's rollout so far is that many doctors either refuse to participate in it or have not yet participated because they are unclear about how it works, according to Miller, who came out of retirement to help Kaiser build its medical-aid-in-dying team.

In some cases, entire hospitals and hospice groups have banned their medical staff from participating in the program.

For Steve Johnson, the hurdles he experienced in obtaining the drug that would kill him included a 15-day pause between the date the law kicked into effect and the date on which his doctors at Kaiser were ready to accept requests from patients who wanted to participate.

Even after he had completed every item on the checklist to qualify for the program, Johnson's widow, Kathy, said her husband had to wait an additional two weeks for his doctor to write him the prescription because there wasn't yet a pharmacy

in Hawaii that could prepare the medication.

It took Steve Johnson almost six weeks to fill his prescription from the day he first requested the drug from his doctor, Kathy Johnson said.

During this time, Kathy Johnson said her husband felt stressed and anxious that he might suffer a stroke or some other complication that could rob his mental capacity, rendering him unable to make the decision to ingest the medication. He understood it was a decision that his wife could not make for him if he were to lose his soundness of mind.

But when he finally got the drug into his home medicine cabinet, Kathy Johnson said her husband felt a palpable sense of ease.

"That was like giving Steve a Christmas present because he was just so relieved that he finally had control of his destiny, rather than what we'd seen happen with many cancer patients ... hooked up to all these machines with a lot of suffering and pain," she explained. "Steve didn't want that – not for him, not for me, not for our family."

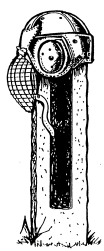
Steve Johnson did not take the drug immediately. But when he got to a point where he was vomiting regularly and could not sleep nor discern between reality and his waking dreams, he decided it was time.

"We did have a few friends who tried to talk him out of it or tried to do religious trips on him, and he got tired of that," Kathy Johnson said. "It wasn't up to him to convince them that he was making the right decision. It's surprising how many people felt like it was up to them to convince him to not make that decision and just let nature take its course, when that's not what he was going to do."

Kathy Johnson called her husband's hospice nurse May 4 to alert him that the decision had been made: Steve Johnson would ingest the medication the following day.

The nurse arrived at the Johnson's home the next morning and stayed there until Steve Johnson's body had been taken away for cremation.

"The relief he had was that he could just drink the Kool-Aid, lay down and take a nap," Kathy Johnson said. "He didn't waste away; he didn't lose any cognitive function. He was still Steve until he died, which is something he wanted for all of us." 🕯



## Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to:

Chuck Sheley  
10 Judy Lane  
Chico, CA 95926

### **Randy G. Leypoldt** (Smokejumper Pilot)

Randy died July 17, 2019, while on duty as a smokejumper pilot in Fairbanks, Alaska. He grew up in Las Vegas and started taking flying lessons while in high school. Randy was a police officer for the North Las Vegas P.D. for about 10 years before moving to Buhl, Idaho, where he was involved in farming.

Randy loved flying and started doing crop dusting which led to his extensive career in aviation. He flew low-level operations, dropped smokejumpers, and was involved in military contracting in Afghanistan and Africa. At the time of his death, he was working with Big Horn Airways as a contract pilot for the BLM Smokejumper crew in Alaska. Randy was one of the few pilots who are members of the NSA.

### **Marvin L. "Bus" Bertram** (McCall '47)

Bus, a resident of Moses Lake, Washington, died June 12, 2019. After graduation from high school, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and fought in Europe. Bus jumped at McCall in the 1947 and the 1952 seasons.

### **Roger A. Harding** (North Cascades '54)

Roger, 84, died August 17, 2019, at his home in Port Townsend, Washington. He was in the Air Force from 1948-52 and jumped at North Cascades 1954-55.

Roger received his degree in Forestry from the University of Washington in 1956. He worked for the Washington State Dept. of Natural Resources from 1956-82 and retired as manager of Land Inventory.

After retirement, Roger and his wife spent time as Peace Corps volunteers in Senegal, West Africa.

### **Joe Terry West** (Missoula '56)

Terry died June 17, 2018, in Springfield, MO.

He attended Arkansas State University on a football scholarship before joining the Army. He was a helicopter pilot and retired from the Army as a Lt. Col. Terry was a member of the Vietnam Veterans Helicopter Association and the NSA.

Following his retirement and honorable discharge from the United States Army, he worked as Director of Emergency Management for the Department of Civil Defense in Greene County, MO, for six years. Terry jumped at Missoula 1956-58.

### **Ted F. Keith** (Idaho City '58)

Ted, 83, died September 1, 2019. He graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Accounting. Ted started work with the Roseburg Lumber Company (Oregon) and went to a division of Boise Cascade in St. Paul, MN. Then he moved to Boise and spent 30 years with Boise State University as Director of Internal Audit.

Ted jumped at Idaho City in 1958 and McCall in 1959.

### **Ed Dearborn** (Associate)

Ed, 87, died August 28, 2019, while living in Lake Forest, California. He was still working full-time at FlightSafety International as a Gulfstream Instructor and Training Center Examiner. Ed was a Marine and an aviator. He served in Korea, Vietnam and with Air America. Ed wrote an excellent article in the April 2009 issue of *Smokejumper* on the fall of Long Tieng.

### **Hans C. Smith** (West Yellowstone '00)

Hans, 55, died September 17, 2019, from a fall off a roof while doing storm recovery work near Ely, MN. He started work for the Forest Service in the late 70s. His Dad worked on the Superior N.F. for over 30 years. Hans was a member of the Zigzag Hotshots during the 1997 season. He was



a skilled sawyer and excelled as a teacher for the USFS.

Hans jumped at West Yellowstone in 2000 and 09, and at Missoula 2001-04 and 2006-08.

#### **Roland M. Stoleson** (Missoula '56)

Ron, 83, died September 9, 2019, at his home in North Ogden, Utah. He graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in Forestry and also played on the University baseball team.

Ron then began a career with the Forest Service that spanned more than 40 years. He was a fire lookout, smokejumper, Hotshot crew foreman, District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, and held other staff positions retiring in 2000. Ron was very active in the NSA Trails Program over the years, as well as other volunteer work in the Region 4 office in Ogden. He received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement award for his volunteer work in 2014.

Ron was a Past President of the NSA and served as a board member for a number of years.

He jumped at Missoula 1956-58, 60, 66 and Grangeville in 1959.

#### **Eric T. "Blak" Schoenfeld** (Cave Jct. '64)

Eric, 75, died at his Oregon home on September 14, 2019. He was raised near Portland, Oregon, attended Reed College, and graduated from Portland State University. After jumping at Cave Jct. 1964-66, he joined the Air Force and rose to the rank of captain, spending most of four years working as an air traffic controller.

In 1973 he returned to jumping at NCSB and switched to LaGrande in '74. Eric jumped in Alaska from 1976-93 where he trained a whole generation of Alaska spotters. From Rod Dow (MYC-68): "Blak will long be remembered for his brilliant mind, his pragmatic view of life and his no nonsense approach to virtually everything. Throughout his life, he slept very few hours each night, and we all remember the many times he held court around jumper campfires until the morning sun finally sent those few remaining to the sack." 🙏

## **NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions**

<b><u>Donor</u></b>	<b><u>In Memory Of/Honor of</u></b>	<b><u>Donor</u></b>	<b><u>In Memory Of/Honor of</u></b>
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Larry Smith .....	Ron Stoleson (MSO-56)		

**Contributions since the previous publication of donors October 2019**  
**Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$204,740**

**Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:**  
**Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926**



## NSA Scholarships 2019

*Photos Courtesy Recipients*



**Linnea Leist**



**Jon Joiner**



**Brooke Hornberger**



**Kerissa Sheley**



**Angela Barbetta**



**Amy Duning**



**Hannah Kaiser**



**Mike Stackley**



**Michelle Chung**

*Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)*

# 2019 NSA Scholarship Recipients

by Jim Cherry (Missoula '57)

NSA Scholarship Committee Chair

**A**gain this year, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce to our readers the recipients of the 2019 NSA Scholarship Awards. A total of 18 individuals applied for the 2019 scholarships, and the NSA was able to provide nine \$2,500 scholarships. This is only made possible through the generosity of the NSA's members and friends. Thanks to all of you who support the NSA and its mission.

**Amy Duning (NIFC-07)** is a two-time recipient of the NSA scholarship (2017 & 19). After graduating from Iowa State University in 2001, she jumped out of Boise for 10 years. Amy writes the following in her application narrative: *I have been accepted to the Idaho State University's accelerated Bachelor of Nursing program (Meridian, Idaho campus.) Idaho State's accelerated program is a two-and-a-half-year program condensed into 12 months. My life for the next year is going to be one of the biggest challenges I have been presented. However, I have worked extremely hard for the past three years balancing family and school with my focus on getting into this program. I have earned all A's, volunteer teaching art at the elementary school, and coach kindergarten boys' soccer.*

*I have an enormous sense of pride simply applying for this scholarship. I have learned more than chemistry, pharmacology and biology while preparing for this program. I have had the opportunity to develop humility and grace, while maintaining tenacity and focus. Learning to prioritize my family while putting forth my best academic effort, dealing with disappointment and setbacks along the way have all contributed to my personal growth.*

*This summer, it will be five years since my husband burned out of a tree and was life flighted to Boise for three weeks. It was there that I watched the nurses in action and the seed was planted for this path. I look forward to giving back to the community and helping patients recover from illness or trauma. I hope it doesn't happen, but if another smokejumper comes through the door in need of help, I want to be the nurse to help him or her.*

**Kerissa Sheley** is a two-time recipient of the NSA scholarship (2017 & 2019). In her narrative, she wrote: *I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Oregon and the affiliated Robert D. Clark Honors College in June with an undergraduate GPA above 3.75. I have been accepted to Belmont's School of Law for fall 2019 and was also granted admission to the JD/MBA program in association with the Massey School of Business. My goal is to work in the Sport and Entertainment Industry as a management consultant, or to lead an in-house legal team. I believe that completing both a JD and MBA will be the best combination to prepare me to be successful in this industry.*

*My involvement during my undergraduate years has played a significant role in shaping my current career aspirations. During my time at the University of Oregon, I participated in extracurricular activities, including the Oregon Cheer and Dance Team, the Warsaw Sports Business Club, Greek Life, and the University of Oregon Athletic Department's marketing team. Not only have my experiences enhanced my career development but have also provided unique opportunities for me to give back to my community. I also devoted my time to working part-time jobs on campus 18-20 hours per week and 40 hours per week in the summer.*

**Jon Joiner (NIFC-16)** is a current jumper and has been admitted to the University of Idaho with a major in Fishery Resources. He writes the following in his application narrative: *I've been in the fire service in one way or another since I was 18 years old. My experience first started when I attended the fire academy at Shasta College in 2011. I graduated with the academic award for having the best grades in my class. From there I started volunteering through the county with a fire company where I stayed for a year and a half. I continued my career by working on a Type II crew between school years. My summers were spent working on that crew until I received my associate degree in 2013 from Butte College. I took my finals early that year so that I could work the entirety of the*



2013 fire season with Ukonom Hotshots. My 2014 and 2015 fire seasons were spent working for the Mendocino Hotshots. In 2016 I was finally selected by the Boise Smokejumpers to go through rookie training.

*I'm undoubtedly grateful that I found a career in the fire service. The experiences I've had and the people I've met have helped prepare me to be successful now and in my future. Through my experiences I've tried to hold on to the good qualities that I know make me an effective leader and follower, such as keeping a positive attitude and being supportive to my peers. I also constantly try to recognize good qualities others possess that I may need to develop. Motivating others in a positive way, reminding oneself to stay calm, and staying focused on the present are all things that I constantly remind myself to do. I try to be supportive and help others learn because I know that if I didn't have leaders who did that for me, I would not be as successful as I've been.*

**Linnea Leist** will be a junior at Victoria University with a double major in psychology and elementary education. She included the following in her application narrative: *My goal is to become an elementary school teacher with an emphasis in psychology in order to enhance the mental health and well-being of a school community. I've spent a large portion of my life in community service. I have volunteered to help children learn the basics of reading at the public library for several years until I aged out of the program. The library nominated me for the prestigious Youth Now award. I also had the privilege of being responsible for public relations in my youth Toastmasters group. Through volunteering during my high school years, I was awarded a Humanitarian Award by unanimous teacher vote. For me, volunteering and healthy interactions can be like a well-managed fire; my personal prosocial deeds create a spark and ignite a larger fire of community giving and shared kindness, leading to new growth and purification.*

*To help fund my education, I have obtained a part-time job. Currently, I am a tour guide for the University of Victoria. Previously, I worked as an after-school care worker. I also participate in competitive Irish dancing through a local dance school. Dance has taught me further strength, courage, perseverance, and has also provided opportunities to help within the dance community. This scholarship would provide a chance for me to further help with tuition costs and give me*

*the opportunity to fully invest in what I need to make my education a success.*

**Brooke Hornberger** will be in her second year at Stevenson University where she is majoring in Biochemistry with a goal to pursue a pharmacy career. Her application narrative included these comments: *I feel I have experienced a significant amount of self-growth over the past year, as I attended my first year of college. The summer prior to my senior year I had the humbling opportunity to attend Wyoming Girls State. I was also selected in March 2017 to be a United States Senate Page. This 2018-2019 school year I was involved in several different clubs and organizations that contributed to my overall experience. I also have the pleasure of being a member of the Mustang Mentors club that reaches out to Deer Park Middle School in the Baltimore area to mentor students in scholastic and life skills. Furthermore, I became employed at the Goldfish Swim School in Owings Mills, Maryland, as a lifeguard and swim lessons instructor.*

*Each of these positions have had a large contribution to my life and leadership this first year of college. This past year I became employed and I currently hold a part-time job to supplement my additional living expenses while attending college.*

**Hanna Kaiser** will be a second-year student at Montana State University (Gallatin College) where she is pursuing a degree in Business Management with a minor in Commercial Aviation. In her application narrative, she shared the following: *I believe in hard work and dedication; I think that those two qualities can take a person to the moon and back in terms of success. I have found myself attempting to live up to these words through community service. Throughout my life, I have participated in a large amount of community service and cannot stop as I have found a genuine love for it. I have found true happiness in being able to help my community and the people in it.*

*I have just earned my private pilot's license this April, and I hope to have earned a commercial pilot's license by the time I earn my degree, allowing me to jump into aviation as a career as soon as possible. After college I am looking into commercial aviation or possibly flying for the smokejumpers.*

**Angela Barbetta** is entering her second year at the University of South Florida where she is in the

Master of Public Health (MPH) program while also pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases. Her narrative states the following: *My career has evolved through many phases as I explored my strengths, weakness, and what was truly important to me and how I could best contribute in a meaningful way. After college, I landed in retail management because I was good at it and it would pay the bills. After about 5 years of this, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had lost my way. I realized I just didn't care that much about how socks were arranged and knew I was meant to do something that was closer to my desire to help others.*

*I had always loved animals, so that was the direction I went. I was introduced to Medical Laboratory Science when I attended a presentation where they described the different types of medical testing they performed and how vital the profession is to patient health. After working as a Medical Lab Scientist for close to 10 years, I am now ready for the next phase of my career. With my current position, I have found the right path and am now intent on growing my current skills in preparation for the next part of my journey. An MPH will be an excellent foundation from which I can pursue this goal.*

**Michelle Chung** is enrolled at the University of Idaho to earn her Secondary Education Certification with Family Consumer Science Endorsement. Her narrative shares the following: *When people ask me what I do and I tell them I'm a teacher...they smile very softly. Then they ask what grade I teach. When I tell them I teach junior high (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders), their faces turn upside down in complete sorrow and confusion for me. I usually just laugh, and then I say, "Oh, I LOVE MY JOB SO MUCH!"*

*For the last 13 years, I have been a stay-at-home mom, working part time as an Elementary Substitute Teacher. I couldn't go back to school or work full time due to our son's illness. Last Spring, I was asked to be a permanent substitute teacher at West Junior High, teaching Family Consumer Science. I decided to substitute teach full time for one semester and test the waters. After about a month, I had a new love for teaching all together. Junior High, Family Consumer Science was my niche. I loved it!*

*After this experience, I realized that my tenacity, creativity, love and compassion for these students was something I HAD to do. I needed my secondary teach-*

*ing certification and endorsement of FCS. The Boise School District was so eager to keep me in the program, they offered me a part-time position at North Junior High, teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade Family Consumer Science, under the agreement that I would go back to school and earn my Secondary Certification and complete my Family Consumer Science Endorsement within 3 years.*

*Being a teacher is not just a job. It's a passion, it's hard work, it takes love, kindness, patience, drive, and it takes a certain kind of person to touch junior high students, and I have all those qualities. This is something I have to do with my life.*

**Michael Stackley (RDD-14)** is a former smoke-jumper who is attending Shasta College in the Nursing School. His application narrative recounts the following: *I started my career in fire in 2006 as a seasonal hotshot for a crew in New Mexico. Thinking back to that very first day, I would have never thought fire would have led me on the journey it did and to the place in my life where I am currently at. I have learned a lot from fire, and not just about fire itself. Fire is what taught me to grow up. Fire itself was fun and exciting, but the life lessons I have learned along the way have taught me much more about myself and the type of person that I want to be than I could have ever thought possible. I consider myself today unrecognizable to that person that started fire back in 2006, and thankfully in the best possible way. Fire taught me what hard work is and what strong work ethic looks like. It taught me how to pay attention, to be a good follower, a good worker, and what being tired after a good day of work really feels like. It taught me accountability and responsibility. It taught me how to be a part of a team; to work well with others in the worst possible situations and still accomplish something great. It taught me what good leaders are, what great leaders are, and most importantly, what bad leaders are.*

*After leaving the Redding smokejumper base at the end of August last year, I have been in school full time. Last fall while I was attending school prior to the nursing program starting, I was able to work part time as a scribe at the hospital emergency room to gain some experience working in a hospital. Most unskilled jobs at the hospital don't pay much in way of monetary return, but they do offer a lot in the way of experience. Times have changed a bit since my years of being in fire, but I am appreciating the challenge of a new journey and will look forward to the payoff at the end of the road. 🏠*

# Smokejumper Folklore: ‘You Know You’re A Smokejumper If ...’

by Mike Bina (Missoula ’68)

**T**hese smokejumper folklore truisms are as I can best recall them through a memory that is admittedly failing.

Folklore stories are tales of a unique culture’s traditions that are passed on and shared from one generation to another. Often details are added from one telling of the story to the next. As such, one wonders if the additions to the story are factual or imaginative embellishments.

Fact or fiction? Perhaps some of both. The judge of that has to be the audience. Either way it makes for a good story.

We appreciate being able to exercise literary license using Jeff Foxworthy’s “You know you’re a redneck if ...” playbook by offering a slight twist, “You know you’re a smokejumper if ...”

We hope you enjoy some of the smokejumper folklore truisms that follow. Some include humor. Some get to the honest realities and adventures that made our jobs so wonderful and exhilarating. Others get to the core and heart of why we are incredibly grateful to have had this unique opportunity not afforded the faint-of-heart souls who lacked an adventurous spirit.

If these truisms resonate with you – and you think of others – please share them with us by way of the e-mail address at the end of this article. We would love to continue to add to the listing below, perhaps in a *Smokejumper Truisms, Part II*.

So here goes. “1001” ... “1002” ... “1003.”

## **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- your friend asks with surprised wonder, serious disbelief, or maybe teasing, “Why would someone jump out of a perfectly good airplane?”
- your friend jokes, “I guess it’s true: there are only two things that fall from the sky – smokejumpers and bird ‘do-do.’” (And this is a friend? Nice friend you have.)

## **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you can now admit that when you exited the plane on your first jump, you were hit by the

“prop blast” – as a result of our spontaneous protective reflex, both of your eyes were slammed tightly shut. (Note: I refer to all my exits as “night jumps.”)

- you can now admit that you never enjoyed climbing back up the tree to retrieve your “hung-up” parachute. But way back then, you never wanted to admit it to your jump buddies – lest they would think you were a wimp.
- you would have paid your jump buddy large sums of money – if you would have been so lucky to have it – to climb that monster tree you “hung up” in to retrieve your parachute. (Public confession: I offered my jump buddy “Spider” Bob Smee (MSO-68) three beers, and he took the deal. Back in 1969, that cost me the large sum of \$1.20.)

## **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you couldn’t wait to make your second practice jump, or
- after your first jump, you seriously considered returning to your old Hotshot crew, realizing that there wasn’t any shame walking, rather than jumping, into a fire.
- you negotiated with God, who created the many “Wonders of the World” (including the DC-3 and the Pulaski), “Dear God, seriously, I mean it – cross my heart – if you get me through this next jump safely, I solemnly promise to give up watermelon this winter.”

## **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you, after every fire, couldn’t wait to get into the shower, prayed that the hot water would never run out, and feared being so exhausted that you might fall asleep under the showerhead.
- no amount of soap had the capacity to wash away the fire ash or the pungent burnt-wood smoke aroma that seemed to have permeated your entire body.

## **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you were proud of being one, but when anyone



complimented you, or found wonder in your unique job, your unassuming “aw, shucks” humility surfaced.

- you now wonder how you ever found your way back, after a fire, to your jump base, without having your iPhone Google Maps, WAZE, or car-navigation GPS. (Imagining having a GPS directing you as you left the “mopped-up” fire: Recalculating ... proceed 900 yards up to the ridgeline, turn left at the Doug fir snag, proceed for 19 miles.)
- you now often wonder how really rich you’d be, if you – way back then – would have earned premium overtime instead of straight pay.

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you wished when you were an active jumper that you had a Kodak Instamatic – or better yet, today’s iPhone – camera with you to record the rugged, beautiful scenery you jumped into, and the fantastic flare-ups to show your kids and grandkids.
- in spite of not having a camera with you or photographic evidence to show your kids and grandkids, fortunately you have full retention of the vivid memories that are safely archived in your brain for recall on-demand.
- you publicly admit, even to total strangers, with exuberant pride, without remorse, regret or shame, having had in your smokejumping life, some big “hang-ups” and challenging “let-downs.”
- back in your smokejumping days, you couldn’t understand, when you first told your parents you’d be jumping into forest fires, why they were so concerned about your safety – but now, as a parent, you fully and finally get it.

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you developed, as a result of being so incredibly hungry – without any other better menu options available – a fondness for the old C-rations ham and lima beans.
- you know the authentic “on the fireline” name for this C-ration entrée – that is, the “good old ham and \_\_\_\_\_.”
- you know what a “P-38” is, and many times today wish you had one handy.
- you fantasized as you labored with your trusted Pulaski how great it would be, after three days on the fire, getting back to your jump base

and having a cold beer. (And, after getting back you realized the beer was even better than you imagined. Perhaps so good, you had many more.)

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you never FULLY understood veteran jumpers describing what a prop blast was, or what to expect, until you exited the door for the first time – startled thinking to yourself, Oh, so this is what a prop blast is ... Holy toledo. Holy cow. Holy \_\_\_\_.
- after your chute opened, you had never experienced such relieved gratitude when you looked up and saw a full canopy. What a beauty it was to behold as the sun shone brightly through the bright orange and white nylon fluttering as the air rushed through it.
- you noticed, after your parachute opened and you started slowly descending, the sharp contrast between the prop blast’s deafening assault and the total silence that followed.
- you can still recall after your chute opened, and you turned into the wind, the breeze on your face and wishing that the ride down could last longer.

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you are grateful that you never had to use your reserve parachute – but if you did, well, that is another whole level of gratitude.
- you said to yourself as you descended under-parachute to an area where there was no open spot and had no other option but to hang up, “Oh, what the hell! This treetop is as good as any other, but I hope it’s strong enough to hold me and is the shortest tree in the cluster of pines.”
- you can still hear in your mind, as you came in contact with the tree, the sound of your jump suit scraping the bending branches and pine needles – grateful for the padding in your jump suit and the face-guarded helmet.
- you don’t have to Google or look up in Webster’s dictionary to find the meaning of “smokejumper esprit de corps, camaraderie or work ethic.” After all, you lived it.

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- in your current job, you often say to yourself, *Yes, my job is very stressful and challenging, but I can deal with anything that comes my way. No sweat, having been a smokejumper. Nothing in my*

*job is more stressful than jumping out of a plane to a jump spot where no human has ever been, amid skyscraper-tall pines to conquer a blazing, uncontained, wild inferno. Today's challenge? Bring it on! I've got this.*

- you loved digging fireline in the battle against nature, denying the eager-to-grow blazing enemy more fuel. Bump up!
- you loved the day or two after coming back off a fire: getting rested, enjoying hot meals, a bed, a shower, and doing the often mundane projects around the jump base. Then, however, you got a serious case of the “smokejumper itch” – a burning desire for another jump and fire, watching with excitement as your name rose on the jump list. PG bag ready to go!
- you got into your “zone” when the siren sounded and you heard your name announced, “We have a two-man fire in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. The jumpers will be \_\_\_\_.” You knew within minutes you would be fully suited up, airborne, and seated in the “first class” section of the DC-3 – on the floor.
- circling over the fire, your heartbeat rose as you hooked up and stood in the door, awaiting the spotter’s slap on the back of your leg. Everything was on autopilot. Exit. Prop blast. Canopy

check and the beginning of a slow decent from a thousand feet. Does it get any better than that?

#### **You know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- each and every time you fly commercially, you notice with disappointment as you board the plane that the rear door is closed – NOT open for jumpers.
- each and every time you fly commercially, you look out the window as the plane climbs to jump altitude, thinking how great it would be to jump again.
- when the plane is at jump altitude, you, with a healthy fear of heights, ask yourself, Really – I actually jumped from way up here? How in the hell did I do that? I don’t even like getting up on a two-story ladder to clean the rain gutters.

#### **And lastly, and most importantly, you know you’re a smokejumper if ...**

- you realize, as you get older, you have an increasing desire to give back to smokejumping, owing so much for having had the privilege of being one and how much it contributed to who you are today.

Do you agree?

Looking forward to you sending other smokejumper folklore truisms to [beanuh1@yahoo.com](mailto:beanuh1@yahoo.com). 📧

## **Anthology Of A Reluctant Warrior**

by Gary Shade (Missoula '69)

**E**very jumper who comes through the smokejumper program gets a lifelong hash tag, with five symbols. The first three are the airport abbreviation designation of your rookie year base, and the last two numbers are your rookie year. There were 13 bases in the country, including Alaska. Jumpers in Alaska are allowed to “pack” for bears.

One early June morning in 1969, I awoke in the barracks of the U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers base in Missoula. I was a trainee jumper and had passed the PT test.

The first thing that is done on day one of jumper work is a PT test. This goes for trainees

and returning jumpers. If you don’t pass, you’re fired.

Now I was living at the jumper base, fully engaged in the jumper culture and work, in a total state of awe and disbelief. I was exactly where I wanted and needed to be with a group of guys I looked up to. But, I saw I was very much like them, and we were all committed to hard work and adventure.

I jumped for five seasons – one before the Army, and four afterward, but with a break in between. Among the jumpers, I was somewhat private and low-key about myself. I was not a leader among this group of men, nor much of



Gary Shade (Courtesy G. Shade)

a standout. My focus was to keep up with these guys, my head down, and just make sure I was not a weak link in the team.

Every jumper seemed to have an interesting personal life story and quite varied. Most of the guys were from the West and most had spent time working ranches, farms, mines, and forests before getting hooked on fighting forest fires. There were men going to college, teachers, combat vets, ski bums, oil field workers, etc., and most were single. They all had one common purpose – to spend the summer fighting fire as smokejumpers.

I was one of the few from the east coast, and certainly the only one who could claim he was Pennsylvania Dutch. I was in a state of wonder. Somehow, I had sneaked into this lifestyle and loved it.

When I started jumping, the only thing I knew about the work was from a single black and white pamphlet I had picked up in California. Remember, this was 1969 BC (before computers). So every day was just a total new state of adventure and wonder. Oh – and what do you call a jumper without a girlfriend? Homeless.

One of the delightful things I discovered among the jumpers was the art of storytelling. You put a group of jumpers together, in the woods

after a long day, around a campfire, and the boys start telling “jump stories.”

In the early days, I was in amazement of the stories I would hear, and the way they were told. And soon, I would be having some of the same experiences. Every fire jump was an adventure, but we put ourselves in harm's way to have this experience, and to be with our mates. It was also where I was to learn the meaning of the phrase, “The highs are really high and lows are really low.”

Over the years, the only story about me that seems to have staying power among some jumpers is about a barroom brawl I was involved with in Redmond, Ore.

It was a bar fight between a group of jumpers from Winthrop, Wash. (North Cascades) and Missoula, with tables and bodies crashing, women screaming, pitchers of beer on the floor, and me fleeing out a side door as wailing blue lights began to fill the parking lot. The fight involved hurt feelings, whiskey, and women – duh.

At first light next morning, I and the other MSO perpetrators were unceremoniously hustled onto a Twin Beech and flown back to Missoula. We were told that for the rest of our jumping careers we were *persona non grata* in the Redmond jumper base. That worked for me – a lot better than some slammer time.

The sad part of my memory loss is that most of the details of my jumper experiences and adventures are gone. But I do have a few to share, so let me write one down before it evaporates. Some from my MSO 1969 class have noticed I was not in the rookie class picture after the final qualifying jump.

Yes, that's right – I didn't make the final seventh jump with my class. I was in the hospital recovering from emergency surgery.

Trainees are required to complete seven training jumps to qualify for the “jump list,” and we do this as a class. The last two jumps are done one day after the other.

In our DC-3 airplane on a training jump, I noticed an unusual pain or stitch in my lower right side, but as the adrenaline kicked in, I became oblivious to any stupid pain. Once back at the barracks and the rush beginning to wear off, that damned pain in my side came back with a vengeance.



Lying in the bunk with the ache, I was not able to get up for chow, so I knew something was bad wrong.

I finally called out for help and had mates run me down to the emergency room in Missoula. Yep, my appendix needed to be immediately removed before it burst.

The next morning, when my DC-3 was taking off, I was in a critical care unit at the Missoula hospital. The good news was that all went well with the procedure and there would be no complications. The bad news came quickly to my hospital bed. With training jumps done, there would be only one more refresher jump in a week and that was it. If I wasn't on that plane, I'd be fired, but worse yet, I had to have my doctor's release saying I was good to jump.

Now, remember this was back in 1969 and old-time surgery, so there was a lot of digging around in my gut, plus a nice long scar. So, I'm into my first day of recovery, and I explain to my doc about the jumper ultimatum.

He said that I needed to get active and walk-

ing as soon as possible even though I would have to work through the pain. So I did. Getting out of bed, holding onto the wall with my left arm and my right hand pressed to my side, I started walking around the room and then down the hall, holding on to the wall, working through the pain. The one thing the doc forgot to tell me was when I should stop "working through the pain."

Starting with my first day in recovery, I would get up several times and attempt walking along with minor exercise. I figured I should "stop working through the pain" when the stitches in my incision ripped out, and the doc agreed. That long, thin scar was now a wide gash.

So for the next week, I put mind, body and soul into getting myself back in shape. Two days out of the hospital I went back to work on light duty and just kept busy. The day before the scheduled refresher jump, the doc examined me, and then stepped back and shook his head.

He said, "I don't know how you did it, son, but you're healed up enough to jump out of that plane you've been yakking about." 🦋

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## MANN GULCH 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

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A COUPLE HUNDRED people gathered on August 4/5 in Helena, Montana, and at the Helena-Lewis and Clark N.F. Meriwether Campground for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mann Gulch Fire.

The Museum of Mountain Flying with their Mann Gulch DC-3, aka Miss Montana, hosted the August 4th gathering at the Helena Airport. They served a barbeque dinner and displayed 13 wreaths that were dropped the next day using the Mann Gulch DC-3, the same airplane that dropped 13 smokejumpers who perished on August 5, 1949. After nearly

20 years laying idle, the aircraft was restored and participated in the D-Day invasion reenactment this past June in Normandy, France. It will continue to be used by the museum at air shows around the country and providing rides for the public.

On August 5, the Helena-Lewis and Clark N.F., Montana Discovery Foundation, and the National Smokejumper Association partnered to host a gathering at the Meriwether Campground along the Missouri River. The Gates of the Mountains Boat Club provided transportation to the campground. The Forest provided a

barbeque and refreshments and about 50 people hiked up the ridge overlooking Mann Gulch. Several hiked down into Mann Gulch, past the 13 monuments, and on up to the ridge overlooking Rescue Gulch.

Several veteran Smokejumpers were present for both events along with family members from two of the smokejumpers who jumped on August 5, 1949. One was Brian Sallee, a cousin of Bob Sallee, one of the three survivors of the Mann Gulch Fire. The other family members were those of Eldon Diettert who perished in the fire. 🦋



**Mann Gulch Fire 70th anniversary.** Standing L-R: Colt Barnard (Mann Gulch Legacy Student), Dan Tomich (MSO-61), Ron Stoleson (MSO 56), Digger Daniels (MSO-61), Dave Bennett (MSO-61), Carl Gidlund (MSO-58), Milt Knuckles (MSO 61), Kim Maynard (MSO-82), Sal Garnica (MSO-82), Doc Lammers (MSO-71). Kneeling: Jack Dunne (MSO-46), Fred Cooper (NCSB-62), Fred Ebel (MSO-57), John Driscoll (MSO-68), Keith Wolferman (MSO 91).

## The Real Cost of Wildfires

by Bob Zybach

(*The Oregonian* of Portland, Ore. Reprinted with permission.)

**T**he tab for U.S. wildfires, as commonly reported by the news media, is only a fraction of the full costs experienced by the public.

Darrel Kenops' recent commentary in *The Oregonian* ("Balancing protection with beneficial use") makes the point that we export our environmental impacts to international destinations when we cannot find ways to locally meet our nation's needs for forest products. Excellent point. But lost in this discussion are the year-in-and-year-out

costs that citizens must bear each time a wildfire scorches mile after square mile of Oregon's forests.

Real costs for wildfires are stupendous and insidiously invisible. It isn't just the billion dollars or more diverted each year from other useful programs in federal and state budgets to stamp out fires as typically reported by the media. Most expenses are never assigned to the bottom-line costs of wildfire.

For example, less tangible values such as damaged wildlife habitat, degraded soil, and lost recreational opportunities are difficult to value monetarily; yet, these are greatly valued by the public, as are clean air, clean water and beautiful scenery.

With co-authors Michael Dubrasich, Gregory Benner and John Marker, we have published a one-page checklist of real costs that also should be tallied when the news media covers wildfire.

On this list are property costs, including damage to federal, state, private, utility and municipal facilities; public health, including asthma, emphysema and coronary disease; indirect firefighting costs, including crew training, equipment and inventories of supplies; and post-fire costs, including timber, agriculture and home losses. The checklist goes on to detail air and atmospheric, soil-related, recreation, aesthetic and energy effects, plus the loss of cultural and historical resources.

We estimate that, nationwide, the true costs of wildfire, over and above seasonal firefighting

## National Smokejumper Reunion

June 26–28, 2020  
in Boise, Idaho

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Send us your Smokejumper or other pins, Trail Crew pins, and/or patches that are hiding in your sock drawer. We'll sell them to collectors on eBay with all money going into the NSA Good Samaritan Fund and acknowledge you in a later issue.

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CA 95926

expenses, range between \$20 billion and \$100 billion a year – or between 10 to 50 times what is typically reported to simply put out fires.

So what can be done? There are those who think that passive management of our publicly owned forests is the correct path: those that espouse the “naturally functioning ecosystem” and “let it burn” school of forest management.

I doubt the public has much appetite for the kind of fires that occurred in the past, as described by Kenops, before we began excluding fire from the landscape. The massive fires of the past – extinguished only when winter weather arrived – are not acceptable today. Also not acceptable is the status quo. In effect, public policy for the past 20 years has been to fight nearly every fire that ignites, yet do nothing to manage the consequences of insect-infested, diseased, windthrown and overstocked forestlands.

There are successfully tested alternatives to passive management. Actively removing excess woody biomass, thinning stands of trees for beneficial use, and selectively employing prescribed fire are among them. These activities all have costs, but some can be done profitably: creating long-term jobs, reducing risks for severe fire, beautifying our forests, protecting our resources, and offsetting our international dependence on energy and forest products.

These activities will have their own environmental impacts. But then, so does doing nothing.

## Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

**Many NSA members** are switching to the digital version of *Smokejumper* delivered by email instead of the printed edition. It is sent as a PDF identical to the hard copy issue.

Advantages include early delivery, ease of storage, NSA postal expense savings.

To request email delivery contact Editor  
Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) [cnkgsheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgsheley@earthlink.net). 📧



And, in the long haul, doing nothing is proving to be much, much more expensive. 🧐

Bob Zybach is the program manager for Oregon Websites and Watersheds Project Inc.

Visit our website at [smokejumpers.com](http://smokejumpers.com) to see all items!

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The SMOKEJUMPERS cap offers gold embroidery and trim with a Velcro strap, while the U.S. Forest Service cap has a brass buckle and green-and-white "sandwich"-style bill. The new NSA logo cap is a much-lighter khaki with green bill, as well as Velcro adjustment strap.

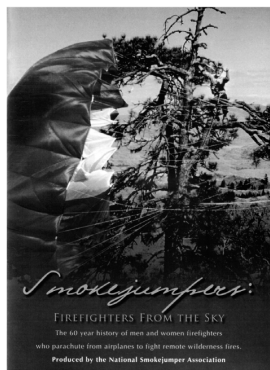
They'll look fantastic in the yard or around town. *Why not get one of each?*

**SMOKEJUMPERS cap \$20 • USFS Smokejumpers cap \$15 • New NSA logo cap \$20**



### Movie inspired many young smokejumpers

Loosely based on the Mann Gulch Fire in which 12 jumpers and a firefighter died, "Red Skies of Montana" was released in 1952. Starring Richard Widmark, Constance Smith and Jeffrey Hunter. **\$15**



### Exhaustive DVD tells the story of smokejumping

"Smokejumpers: Firefighters From the Sky" is a definitive record of smokejumping, featuring 120 minutes of history from 1939 to 2000. Interviews with many former jumpers, as well as footage from action in the field. **\$10**

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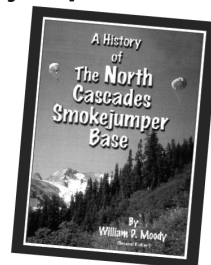


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# Thoughts on Vicki Christiansen's (Chief of the USFS) Interview with the *Wall Street Journal* (Oct. 5, 2019)

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Jct. '59)

I wanted to wrap up this issue and hoped that all would fit in 48 pages. Then, Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) sends me an interview from the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) by the head of the Forest Service.

I'm not going to print the interview, as you can go online and read it. What the Chief said is important in understanding what we are dealing with today breathing, in many cases, three months of smoke.

Here's where I really have a problem with what Ms. Christiansen says: *Not only would it be impossible to suppress every blaze, she wouldn't do it if she could.* "Forest fire," she says, *"is something the nation has to live with."*

*"We don't ask the National Weather Service to prevent and stop all hurricanes," she says. "We ask communities and others to be prepared to receive a hurricane."*

The reason we don't ask the National Weather Service to prevent and stop all hurricanes is that

there is no way to prevent and stop all hurricanes. We certainly would do so if it were possible.

Can we stop and prevent all wildfires? Of course not, however we can stop many wildfires with rapid initial attack and a wiser use of our resources. The people of Montana, Washington and Oregon are getting very concerned. Read Murry Taylor's article in this issue concerning the formation of the Oregon Wildfire Response Council in response to the millions of dollars lost in the tourist/agriculture areas.

Read Michael Rains article about the health effects of smoke on our public. There is more and more science showing that the particulate matter in wildfire smoke will have long-lasting health effects on those who have to live in areas under this smoke. When will the Forest Service realize that they have an obligation to protect our citizens? I wonder if Ms. Christiansen would allow her grandchildren to breathe wildfire smoke for three months a year? 🌲

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