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OK, I want to first ask you what attracted you to smokejumping?

I was going to school and needed to make a little bit of money in a short period of time.

Who exposed you to the smokejumping organization?

Well, I had a supervisor on a fire crew that I worked on down in California and he was a jumper, then his supervisor was a jumper and that's how I got... how I sent an application in, in the first place.

So you had worked for the Forest Service before you were a smokejumper. How old were you when you first started smokejumping?

Twenty-three.

What base did you train at?

Redding, down at... in Northern California.

How many years did you work as a smokejumper?

Sixteen and I still am.

How did your family feel about your becoming a smokejumper?

Didn't... didn't bother... bother them a bit. My... I was married, had been married for about four years before I even got into the program, so we knew each other pretty good and didn't have any children at that time. I don't know if she thought I was going to continue on. You know, whether it was just a 2 or 3 year lark, but it wasn't for me, and she doesn't have too many complaints right now as far as I know, so. No problems at all.

Great. What kind of training did you have before you started to jump?

What kind of training, you mean...?

What kind of training did the smokejumper organization give you before you actually jumped out of the plane?

Oh, just normal, I think it was a 160 hours of some of our unit training, that every jumper has to go through, and then certain academic classroom-type training. And it lasted about two weeks prior to our first training jumps. I don't think it's any different than anybody else.
Right, right. Did you feel well-prepared before you made your first jump?

Yes, yes.

Do you remember what your first jump was like?

Yeah, I guess I do. It was early in the morning and I had been coached as to what to expect, so at a... and it was pretty much like what everybody had told me what it was going to be like, and hit the ground and wanted to do it again.

Great. What was your first fire jump like?

My first fire jump was a... what is commonly known as a "crew action", or a large fire. There were sixteen of us on it, and it was up on the Klamath National Forest, in Northern California, right next to the Oregon border. It was just a... it was probably a 20 or 30 acre fire, up in a wilderness area, and we worked on it all night and walked out the next day. It was... some of the things I remember about it was, there was an old phone line, some of the other new people hit the phone line and then hit the ground. You don't know where the jump spot is when you first go out, and at that time... because you, the only thing you want, is to get out of the airplane.

What kind of equipment do you carry on your body when you jump?

Well, we've got the protective equipment. The suit, the Nomax heavy padded suit, and a helmet very similar to a motorcycle helmet, with a screen-type mask, and a harness that holds you to the parachute, and a reserve parachute... an emergency parachute, and a PG bag... a personal gear bag that you carry all your own personal equipment, jacket, socks, maybe a little extra food, any special food that you might want. It totals probably about 60 or 70 pounds.

What kind of parachute do you use?

Down in Redding we were 100% using the FS-12 at this time. We are no longer using the FS-10 which is still an approved canopy. It can be... we've got enough of the new ones that we want to go ahead and use the new ones, hopefully to prevent injuries.

What kind of devices do these new ones have on them that the old ones don't that would prevent injuries?

Well, the, it's the design of the canopy is such that the aerodynamics, the way it flies. And the way... how fast you come down, your descent rate, is such that you don't hit as hard, and you can do a few more things as far as maneuvering goes. You can...
get into tighter spots, and quicker turns, and flatter turns. Which all these things add up to, if you have somebody that knows how to use it. Which your training is... develops... develops that... will decrease your injury rate, and it's already been proven statistically that it does.

RG Would you say that these parachutes are then noticeably more safe than the Derry slot parachutes that were used?

GJ No, I wouldn't say that, not the Derry slot. That's... you're talking 2 or 3 generations back now, and no. The 5A, FS-5A, and then FS-5, and then you're getting beyond my... my experience when you talk much later than that, or earlier than that. No, I would say that the FS-5A, or the Derry slotted-type canopy's are probably comparable. But as far as how easy they let you down, you don't slam into the ground quite as hard, but the new one allows you to manipulate it a little bit better, and you don't hang... maybe, we won't hang up in a tree where you would with the Derry-slotted canopy. It's a little quicker responding, but it can also get you in trouble, too, because of that... if you don't know what you're doing with it.

RG Do you often get hung up in trees?

GJ Personally?

RG Yeah.

GJ No, I don't jump as much as I used to, but as a... on the... for me personally... I hadn't been hung up in a tree in a very, very, long, long time.

RG Do other smokejumpers who are using these new parachutes get hung up in trees as often as...?

GJ Yeah, I don't think that has really changed that much because you still have a level of expertise, or experience. It's going to take a person 4 or 5 years before he really knows what... precisely what he's doing with that parachute. So you're still going to have the mistakes that'll end up being... in trees. Down in California, we have a... we don't have all the little nice openings and meadows like some of the other Regions do. You may... you... you can't say it [would be] blanketed, but we probably have more than our share of people hanging in trees because we just have more trees to jump into.

RG How many years, then, have you actively worked as a smokejumper, as opposed to doing any other kind of work with the smokejumper organization? For sixteen, or...?

GJ Oh, yeah! I'm still an active jumper.

RG Are you... do you have some type of other role, other than just a smokejumper?
GJ Within the Forest Service?

RG Huh huh.

GJ No, that's my primary responsibility down at the Jump Base in Redding. I have some other duties at the Base, itself. I take care of the maintenance of the facility, and stuff, but no, that's my most important job.

RG How many smokejumpers do you have?

GJ 40.

RG Are there any women smokejumpers?

GJ Yes, yes. At Redding we have one female jumper.

RG How long has she been there?

GJ This is her second year.

RG How do you feel about having women in the smokejumper organization?

GJ It doesn't make any difference to me. As long as I can get them to do the kind of work that they're supposed to be doing. Now what does bother me, is with... if a... Whoever the powers, the people that... in the higher-up management positions; our Washington Office people, our Regional Office people, and in some cases, our Forest level people. Our zones... elect to... to... dictate to you who you're going to hire, and what standards you're going to hire under, and then... Hell! I'll give you an example. We had... this year we had no need to hire new people. No first-year jumpers. We didn't have any need for it because we had our full quota of return... returnees. But I was mandated to make an offer to three people in [inaudible] a female on our cert. Our certificate of eligible candidates [is] what a cert. is. And I was not very happy about it to say the least. Not because were doing it to get the female, but the fact that we didn't need to do it! And so, we went ahead and hired three... made offers to three people. The female being the third person on the list. We had a veteran which... you have to hire a veteran. Then we had a white male, and we had the... and he rated out higher than the female. And the female was the third one on the list. So we made offers to three people. The female turned it down, and the white male turned it down. The veteran we did... we did get on board. In fact, he came up here to Missoula. You know, we didn't want to put a training session on for just one person, because they're kind of expensive to put on. And so I talked to the jump base up here in Missoula. We sent him up here to go through their training with their people. He got hurt. And so as a re... this is all... we didn't even need him, but he got hurt. Now the Federal Government is paying his doctor bills, paying his wages for x number of weeks, until he becomes able to perform his work again. And that was the... and I mean, that's
coming into literally thousands and thousands of dollars that we
didn't need to spend, but we had to because of trying to recruit
a woman. I mean that was... you never hear anybody admit to
that, at all. But that's the reason. But, like the... the
female jumper we have now. Her second year... I've got
tremendous amount of respect for her. She... she went through
training, here in Missoula, three years ago and washed out.
And... you know, I went out of my way. I called up... not that I
should get a pat on the back for this. But I called up her
previous... she is from California. So I called up her previous
supervisor, who I'm pretty close friends with, and I said, "Why
don't you have her send an application in for Redding?" I had
talked to him several months before that and wanted to know why
we don't ever get any applications from him. See, he's got a
"hot shot" crew down there, in Southern California. He's a pretty
well known hard- working "hot shot" who's in... and they really
have sent us some good people. And there was... had several
females on his crew for the previous five or six years and they
all came up here [to Missoula]. We never saw any of them down...
apply to Redding. So, I'd call him up and kind of, chew him out.
I said, "How come you don't tell those women to apply at
Redding?" And he said, "Well, they think your a bunch of
rednecks." Or something like that. Which is a bunch of
boloney. But that's what... that's what... the story he told
me. And so I... after I found out that this female had washed
out in Missoula and she was, I think she got a... picked up on an
I.R. crew or something around here, and that winter I called the
same fellow up again down in Southern California and I asked him,
"Have you seen..." her name was Price. "Have you seen Price
lately?" He said, "Well, yeah, she comes in every once in
awhile." I said, "Are you going to have her... tell her to send
an application up here." And she did, and we selected her. But
I had a reason for doing that, too. I wanted to insure that when
I got a... Because I had done a lot of checking. We do a whole
bunch of screening of our... particularly our new people. New
first year jumpers. We're after the best we can get. And I had
done that with Price. I'd talked to the jumpers here that had put
her through the training but she didn't quite make it, I talked
to several other supervisors she had worked for, so I knew what
kind of person she was. And she... yeah, she sent an
application in and we hired her. And she... we had twelve or
thirteen going through the training at that time, and if you
wanted to rate her numerically she'd probably be the upper 1/2 or
upper 1/3, both physically and the mental attitude. She was
hired under our old standards. We have height and weight
standards... national.

RG  What are those standards?

GJ  Well, they... they... when we hired fe... the first female
in Redding, Price, Diane Price. She was hired under the same
standards that I was hired under. You know, at that time,
fourteen years ago. And everybody before then, and everybody
after then, up until two years ago. And they changed the
standards to broaden... to allow larger population to, at least,
have a chance at becoming a jumper. And it was primarily to get minorities and women. To allow them to get into the program and, uh... but she was hired under the existing standards, and she did an excellent job through the training. In fact, her first year, she had the longest packout. Her and two other fellows, the longest pack out of the year, for us down in Redding. Well, I mean, she's doing a real good job, and I... pop my buttons over it, really. I am really, really proud of her. But it, you know, really comes down to that she would, whether she was purple, or... or black; white; female; male; hermaphrodite... whatever you want to call her, she'd be a good jumper! That's how I looked at her. But I do get a little heartburn sometimes over some of the things that goes, that go on in... in we're... the jumpers themselves, that each individual unit is losing more and more of the ability to select their own people when.... In Redding, we're small unit and we've got pretty good rapport with the Region and the Forest, right there in Redding. So we've been able to hang on to it and have... and maintain the control. And we still can get the kind of people we want. We don't spin our wheels a lot on people that aren't going to make it through the program. You know, you hire twenty people and you only get three. That's very expensive and it's time consuming and it's hard on the... it's also hard on the people that don't make it into the program, because they don't have a job! Whereas if they would have waited a year or two, till they either had more experience, or were... or physically build up a little bit for it, they'd be better off, but somebody's pushed them into the program before they're ready, or... And it does harm to both, I think, the jumper program and to the individual. Because you know the way the government hires, if you don't get your application in soon enough, you don't get a job. And if you go and get selected for a jumper position and you washout two weeks into the program, it's going to be darn hard to find another job. Because the season's already started and all the other Forests have already hired all their people. It maybe different up here in Region-1 in Missoula, but down in Region-5, I can't guarantee anybody can have a job or make it through the program.

RG What were the old height and weight standards?

GJ Okay, you asked me that before. The... up until three years ago, the height limitations... you had to be at least 5'5". It was either 5'4" or 5'5"... and... it was a minimum. And you couldn't be any taller than 6'3". And the weight standards were; a minimum weight of 130 pounds and a max of the... 190 for a first year jumper, and 200 for an experienced jumper. Why a double standard at the other end, I'm not real sure. They... I've been told it was because the extra ten pounds that the experienced jumper carried was made up for by his experience, I don't know if I buy that or not, that's what they were. And we had eyesight requirements and hearing requirements. And, like any kind of job, whether it's a fireman or any kind of physical-type work, they normally have some kind of standards they hire by.
RG What are the new standards?

GJ The present standards are a minimum height of 5 foot... decreased 4 or 5 inches, and a maximum height of 6'5". So it increased 2 inches. And then the weight went down to 120 pounds minimum, to 200 pounds across the board, maximum. And then we've got PT [Physical Training] requirements, too. The... a physical fitness test.

RG So that means that there... there might be somebody who's a 120 pounds that's... has to at one point carry out a pack that might be 100 or 120 pounds?

GJ Or 130, or 140. That's right. And that's... that was our... because I happened to be on a committee that met here at Fort Missoula two winters ago. And that's when we re-evaluated our standards. We took a look at our existing standards, which were the 5'4", 5'5", 6'3", and those things, and said, "Well, what can we stretch those... we have to come up with a: Why do you have those standards, and if you do have standards, why... what are your reasons for having them?" And so we had a package we put together about that thick, of justification, or... we did change some of the standards. We kept some of them the same, and we tightened some of them. Well we... and.... [pause]

RG Do you think that this change in standards will help to improve the body of smokejumpers?

GJ I don't know. I... what I don't want it to do: I don't want it to lower efficiency and safety, and that's... bothers me a bit. The changing those... change in the standards. They're not set in concrete, they're... what we're using now for hiring. But they're also being evaluated. And probably within, I would say, 2 to 5 years, we'll have enough data to keep in track of injuries. Pack out injuries, um... jump, our jump injuries and tying it into the... it's all done on a computer, so I don't know what... how they're doing it. But we are... we're filling out data sheets for every injury to see if by following those standards, have we, in fact, caused more injuries. Some of that is going to be real hard to... hard to... I don't know how you're going to.... You know, like you're talking [about] a 120 pound person carrying out a 120 pound pack, that injury may not surface for 10 years. I don't know, but you got to do something. You got to track it somehow.

RG How many smokejumpers are there now in the country, in one year?

GJ I believe... I believe were sitting right around 330 nationally, and I don't think that counts Alaska. The BLM jumpers up in Alaska. And we think we've got about a 140, or so, at Missoula. There's about 45 in Redman, Oregon; about 20 in Winthrop; 40 in Redding; and about 75 in McCall. Whatever that adds up to. I think it's right around 330.
How many openings would you say there are a year, say, in the past few years?

What kind of openings?

For new jumpers.

Well we... OK. Just for first year jumpers? Let's see, we have... it fluctuates every year depending on the... what the previous year was like. You'd have a real busy fire season, you get a... you don't get much of a turnover. Everybody that was there last year really thought it was great, so they come back the following year. But we average, in Redding, 6 to... 6 to 8 new people a year. And sometimes we'll have 0, and sometimes we'll have 15. An average, since I've been there, would be 6 to 8. And I don't... I can't really speak for the other places.

How many applicants do you have, just on... just roughly, for those openings?

We have approximately, I'd say 400 apply. And out of that we may have 100 to 120 that are qualified, that we... that we consider for positions... for Redding. That's just for Redding. For 6 to 8 jobs.

So it is a highly competitive...?

Yes. Yes, and the economy has... you can really see a difference... oh, let's see... the late '70's, early '80's. The economy had a tremendous effect on the number of people that applied. We had... when jobs got harder... harder to get, they, uh... our number of people that applied, zoomed up. And now that... this year, because the economy has picked up a little bit, seems that we didn't have quite as many people apply this year, and whether that's the reason or not, I don't know. But it sure ties in with it real close.

Have you seen any changes in the smokejumper organization other than the ones that we've talked about... sort of a quota system thing established, that particularly interest you or that you would like to talk about? Changes in the kind of people that are now smokejumpers?

Yeah, I guess I have. And I can... again, I can only speak for one Region; California. And the thing that I've... and you know, I don't know whether it's good or bad, but we seem to have more people that have been around for a lot longer in the jumper program. Whereas, when the.... I first started out and [the] first 3, 4, 5 seasons, or years I was with the jumpers, we had a pretty good turnover. That was the way we had our program set up, everybody came in for 1 year, then they went back to the Forest that they worked on. Just a... it was a detail program we had then. And we had... had a, like... I don't know how... how to say it, but....
RG Can I just ask a question? Excuse me for interrupting, but what do you mean by "detail program"?

GJ Okay, a "detail program" is... and what I'm talking about there is... down in California, the Redding Jump Base was unique at that time. It... that was a program that was started back in 1963. And what it was, is a... we had a core of year round jumpers there at Redding. Sometimes as low as 2 or 3, and other times as high as 5 or 6, that were there every year. And then we'd bring in, each fire season, a tremendous amount of new people. 20, say. And we train the 20, at that time we were only about a 25 person unit. We weren't 40 back then, we were only 25. And those folks would go through the jumper training and be stationed at the Base, at the Jump Base, for that summer. And they'd go out and jump fires, they were jumpers for one year. For one season. And then, when they got... and they were permanent employees of the Forest Service. They had what we call appointments. And when they were through with the... when the fire season was over and we didn't have any more need for jumpers, in California, they'd go back to their job on the Forest or the Ranger district. Whether it'd be a slash foreman or a fire engine operator, or assistant fire manager, or whatever kind of job they had. They were "detailed", just for the fire season, into the jumpers. Went through the training, spent the season there, and went back out to their original job which they kept open for them. And then the next year, we would do the same thing. We get some more of those kind of folks from other places. Bring them in. In the meantime, the ones that have jumped the year before, or 2 years before, or 3 years before, starting in 1963, would come back to Redding for 1 week of training, in the springtime, and get refreshed and retrained. And then they'd go back out and do their job. And if we had a need to call them back in... if we had more fires than the 25 that we had there... could handle, we could get on the phone, call those folks up, and they'd come in. They'd be qualified jumpers, and they'd back us up, give us help. And that program lasted until 1974. And to my knowledge, no other Base has ever had a program like that. The thing that comes closest to it right now, is what's going on right here in Region-1 where they farm out... got jumpers down in Hamilton, Coeur D'alene, Plains... got their little spike bases set up, which is similar to it, but not quite... quite the same. That, we... you know, it was a very unique program and supposedly it was kind of like a fire academy. They would come in for that season, they'd get all kinds of fire behavior training, and law enforcement training, and crew-foreman training, and when they got out that season, they supposedly had... had a stronger background in fire, and they could move on up the ladder, the management ladder, when they got back out to the Forest. That's what a "detail"... that's what I meant by the "detail program".

RG Right. Why was that program phased out?

GJ Well, um... it was phased out for a couple different reasons. One of them was that it was... wasn't... wasn't as
cost effective as... I don't know whether that was a name somebody pulled out of the air just to say "we don't want them and this is the reason", but it was a fairly expensive program because we had to bring them in for a week. And we had sometimes up to 60... 60 people like that, that we'd have to put through training, every year. And so, that was one... one thing that caused it, was the... a cost benefit deal. They weren't really making as many jumps as they should, to justify the cost of training. Some of them there... we had people down in Southern California that came up, you know. They were all over the state. Another straw that broke that back... camel's back, on that was the... the need or requirement to have a proficiency jump every so many weeks. It was every fourteen days, at that time. And prior to that we didn't have a requirement like that. You made... you made your 3 jumps... or 2 jumps is all that was qualified. Or [you were] required to be re-qualified in the sprimgtime, then you never... all the rest of your jumps were fire jumps. You didn't have to make any more jumps. But right around '73 or '74 they came up with this proficiency requirement where, every two weeks you had to have, if you didn't make a fire jump, you had to make a practice jump. And so it was kind of unmanageable to bring those folks back in every two weeks, or take an airplane to where they were. So that kind of... kind of, knocked the program, too.

RG Uh, what do most of your smokejumpers do in other seasons of the year... now?

GJ Well... Redding, like I said, we have 40... 40 jumpers there and eight of them are... work year round right there at the base. So that leaves us with right around 30 to 35, let's say, that don't work year round. And of that, we've got... just like any other jumper unit, kind of some unique individuals. And we've got one fellow that's a... that's a... sets up parties for Hollywood. I mean, down... he knows all the... bunch of movie stars down there, in L.A.. And we've got another guy who's a professional rock climber and goes down to South America, or wherever he can get away for, and climbs rocks. Skiers, "world travelers"... a lot of them are busy trying to make a buck, too, in the wintertime. We have a longer season than most other units.

RG What is your fire season?

GJ Well, normally about... we start gearing up... we have people available by the first week of May. Most other places are middle of June, and we start going on fires about then. The first of May to the middle of May, and normally, if you consider Southern California, I've spent many Thanksgivings down in Southern California on fires. So, it's a good six months.

RG That... I would... wouldn't you say that that fire season is almost twice as long as ours here?

GJ Yes. Yes it is.
RG  Do you feel that having people come back year after year changes the... kind of, vigor in that program?

GJ  Yes, that's what we were talking about before, when you asked me about the "detail" thing. Yeah. The... you get a... a new person, a new jumper, first year jumper, is a pleasure to be around, because they're enthusiastic, and they'll do any... You know, they'll sweep floors, they'll clean heads, they don't care what it is. They're just raring to go and willing to help any way they can. That's a real pleasure to supervise people like that. And then, they roll along and about their 3rd or 4th year, depending on the individual, but right about then, they start... almost starting to be more trouble than they're worth. You know. And so that's what's happened now in Redding, is we're getting more and more people that have 8, 9, 10 seasons, and they're really not doing themselves any good because they're still just working 5 1/2 to 6 months a year as a temporary. They don't have any kind of security. Really no guarantee that they're going to have a job next year. We have more and more of that because we don't have that "detail program" anymore. It's... you have a level of expertise there, as far as doing the smokejumper job. And you don't have the worries as far as that goes, but it's... it's the other little things that... the mundane project work around the base that... that really, to me, makes a difference on an individual. Anybody can, when it's... everything's busy and it's hot and heavy and moving fast, anybody can shine in that situation because that's what... that's what they're here for in the first place. But it... what really tells is when it's slow and there's nothing going on and you've got the work to do, but it's not the most interesting work in the world. That's the difference I see, our average age has increased for our crew. I think it's over 30 years old now... our jumpers. Our number of seasons has increased, too, but... you know, the seasons of experience.

RG  Do you see any changes that might... might... might alter this tendency to... for the organization, to become more of a career for someone instead of a seasonal job?

GJ  Yeah. Yeah I think there's some... some light... light at the end of the tunnel, and I... you know, what I think one of the reasons is, that I see it that way, is because of the... the... the active recruitment of females and minorities. I see that as a... you know, there's still a lot of people that are going to complain about that, especially some of the old... old timers. But boy, there's some silver linings to that "dark cloud", if you want to look at it that way. And I see that as a good... as a positive... for the program. You know, just like the... lightening our packout loads. That's a pos... that's going to benefit everybody. And that's the same way with the... with the career opportunities. And, boy! If your going to have to do it, if they're going to make you do it, you might as well get everything out of it you can.
RG Right, right. You mentioned your packout loads being lightened. How was that going to come about?

GJ Just... it's going to cost money. It's going to the "state of the art" materials. As you know, most of the jumper Bases manufacture all of their own equipment. I don't know if you know that or not, but... have you ever been out to a jumper base?

RG I've been out to the one in Missoula.

GJ You see all the sewing machines?

RG Right.

GJ And we manufacture most of the stuff. Each Base has not quite as... well maybe, not quite as big as Missoula's, because they've got more jumpers. But each Base has a similar set up, so.... We're in the process right now, we're probably about a year into it, probably 3 years away from knocking a good 20, 25 pounds off of the loads that our jumpers carry out of the woods.

RG Exactly how... what things would you lighten and what kind of materials would be changed?

GJ Well, it'd go to, maybe some of the lighter nylon, lighter than cotton. Some of the hardware that we use, we can go to lighter weight hardware. We've historically over-built a lot of things. Because you are in the type of work where, you don't want anything to fail on you so you... if one layer's good, you put two layers on. And we're finding out that that's not necessary so we're losing weight that way. Oh... taking a look at the equipment that we drop on people on fires, cargo they get. Disposable-type stuff. It's expensive, like I say, to do it, but it's going to benefit everybody. It's going to not only allow a larger population to... to try to get into the program, but it's going to extend the careers of a lot of the guys like me that aren't as young as they used to be.

RG Right. Would you say then that this may reduce the highly strenuous work?

GJ Yeah. The... the one part of this job, in my mind, that somebody is not going to be able to do, is.... Anything! You know, from fighting the fire, to jumping out of an airplane, to climbing a tree, to whatever you're talking about. The one function, the one part of this job that, if you're going to... be-hitting-your-head-against-the-concrete-wall, not be able to do it... is plain not be able to do it... is going to be the packout. And that'll do it... do it to you. That's the hardest, in my mind. That is the most difficult part of the job. You can, you know, you can get a lot of the other things done. It may take you a little longer or you may tear a parachute up, or something like that, getting it out of a tree. But as far as coming close to not-being-able-to-do-it, it's going to be carrying that weight out of the woods.
RG How do you carry out the packout system right now?

GJ You mean how do we pack all the gear out?

RG Right. What is the procedure for packing the gear out, is a better question?

GJ Well, I imagine each Region is a little bit different, you know, because they got their own policies and personalities making those policies. But basically, anything's that dropped into you, if you can't burn it up, you carry it out. And the instances where that may not be the case, where you may be able to bury it or something, if it's in a wilderness area. And regardless of that, you wouldn't bury a parachute. You wouldn't bury stuff that you're going to use again. And you load it all into a bag... and each Base seems to have its own design for what they think is the best bag for carrying all that out. Load it all into the bag and hit the trail.

RG And is the material packed out to the nearest road and then left, or is the material packed out the whole way with the smokejumper until...?

GJ Well, that's usually decided by the Forest that you're on. If we were jumping out of here and we went up somewhere on the Lolo... the Lolo National Forest would say, "We want those jumpers to pack down trail XYZ to where it crosses the road to 7N03. We'll have a truck waiting at the bottom." Or, "We want them to packout up the ridge. We've got a helispot up there and a helicopter will pick them up." Or, "We've got a pack train coming in to pick up your gear." Or if you jump by a road, then there's no pack at all involved. So it... it varies.

RG You mentioned that all of the smokejumper material was manufactured at each Base. Does that include the parachutes?

GJ Well, they have the capabilities to... each Base could make their own parachutes. But we go for a contract on that. It's a... it's a private industry [that] manufactures the parachutes for us, and each... each year, or every two years, we send a "want list" to.... It's all done right here at the Administrative Services, right here in Missoula, which is Forest Service, and tell them we need 20... 20 new parachutes. Say we've burned 20 up. Maybe 10 have been burned up and 10 have been condemned because of age. Whatever the reason, we let them know we need so much, and then they go out and get a contract for it. The other Bases do the same thing and it's a consolidated order. It's probably a little bit better, because then you get them all made exactly the same. Now, if you had each Base making your own parachutes, knowing jumpers, none of them would be the same.

RG Right. Do you happen to know where these parachutes are manufactured?
GJ Well, they, depends on who the lowest bidder is. It'll send out a prospectives... its rating....

[END OF SIDE A]

[SIDE B]

RG This is side 2 of an interview with Gary Johnson on July 21, 1984. [I'm] going to ask Gary some questions about his work as a smokejumper. During your career as a smokejumper, have you ever worked as a spotter or a pilot?

GJ Not a pilot, but a spotter.

RG How do you, or... how is a spotter selected to work?

GJ Well, that... it's usually your more experienced jumpers. And we've got a policy, again, down in Redding, that we only have our squad leaders, nobody below a squad leaders spots... on fires. We may have some of our older jumpers drop some practice jumps under a controlled situation, feeling that probably in a couple years they may become a squad leader, therefore a spotter. That way we don't have to spend a lot of time training them, that when they do reach that level... but they're picked out of your... all of our overhead down in Redding are spotters. That's how we do it. And I don't know how about some of the other units. I think some of the other units may not make... may have some of their overhead that do not spot, and they have some of their non-overhead that do spot. But it's usually someone that's been jumping for... oh, 6, 7, 8 years and has got a pretty good head on his shoulders, doesn't panic under pressure situations, and [can] make good sound decisions. That's the kind of person to look for.

RG What do you think are some of the most difficult aspects of being a spotter?

GJ Well, that's a hard question because it's a case by case situation. You're not... you're not talking about any one part of the procedure that's really that difficult, but if you... the situation. Depends on what kind of situation you're in. You've got a... you've got a plane load of jumpers you're trying to put on a fire and there's a couple of air tankers, the borate bombers, flying around. And there's a helicopter, and there's... maybe a couple other fixed wings buzzing around the place. The radio is just going crazy, and four different people trying to talk at the same time, then it becomes kind of difficult and confusing. But the actual... the actual job itself, probably the most critical... most critical part of the job would probably be the selection of the jump spot.

RG Do you usually have radio contact with smokejumpers? Does the plane have radio contact?

GJ With the jumpers on the ground?
RG Right.

GJ Yeah. We... we do, and I don't know... I know there's some of the other units do not have the capabilities because they don't have enough radios to. So they don't drop radios to small fires. And you don't... a radio isn't a necessity. We've got panels, you know, signal panels we can lay out and send messages up to the airplane. Down in California we haven't had a situation where we'd run out of radios yet, so we still have a radio for every fire. Which is sometimes good and sometimes bad.

RG Do many of the smokejumpers in Redding have an opportunity to go out on project work during fire season?

GJ No.

RG Is that because the fire season is usually a very busy one?

GJ No, it's because we don't have a whole lot of jumpers. The way we're set up, with 40... see, we had two aircraft down there. Both of them are... have been Twin Otters. And they will be for the next three years. And they... we carry ten jumpers in each airplane. And... so, with 40 people... and we work, split them up so they'll work... we got seven day coverage. Try to get maximum people, seven days a week out of 40. So that ends up with about 26 or 27, on a day. So when you figure you got to put ten in each airplane, that's 20. And then we got to have spotters for the airplanes. That's, say, 24. That only leaves... and then you always have somebody on sick leave or somebody is sick, lame, or lazy. So we just don't have enough people on a daily basis to do project work. We did early project work in the springtime and the late... late project work. Slash burning and that kind of stuff. But during the hot part of the fire season, we're kind of hesitant to turn loose of any of the jumpers.

RG Are there "on Base" activities then, that...?

GJ No. We have work projects at... at Redding itself, yeah. A little background may... our Base burnt down three years ago. I don't know if you knew about that or not.

RG No, I didn't.

GJ Yeah, um... May 11, 1981, a Forest Service aircraft crashed into our building. Killed the four people on board. And so we've been set up in temporary facility, a maintenance hangar for the last three years, and they have just completed the reconstruction of our facility. We've only been in it for about three months now. A brand new type of... it is the newest base now. And so we've been real busy with putting shelves up and then there's a whole bunch of other construction going on out there at the Northern California Service Center. That's what the place is called. N. C. S. C., and there's all kinds of other stuff going on that the jumpers are involved in. Digging ditches,
putting fence up, whatever. So we've had more than enough to keep us busy for the last couple of years.

RG You mentioned that you only use two aircraft and those are Twin Otters. Why is that? I mean, those are...?

GJ Why don't we have more, or why don't we have less, or...?

RG Why have you selected those two planes, or why have those planes been selected to do that?

GJ Well, a Twin Otter is a real good airplane for this work. [In] fact, to my knowledge, cost being a factor in it, it's probably the best aircraft available right now. It's a... gets you down in canyons, gets you back out. Even on one engine. And the old DC-3's, and some of the other aircraft, couldn't do that. And it's a good platform for us, a real good platform for us to work on. We have two of them because it enables us to go two different directions at once. If they have some kind of passenger transport for it, they can take the one, we still have an aircraft there for the jumpers to use. [There are] several... several reasons why we elected to go with Twin Otters.

RG You mentioned that you're... that you're in a new Base facility now. Do most of the smokejumpers live on Base?

GJ No. We have a 25 person barracks. It's available, but it's probably about 1/2 full. Most of them live in apartments. Redding is about the size of, I'd say... I'd say it's comparable to Missoula. It's 40, 50,000. It's got motels... I mean, apartments and rentals. There's a lot available there in town. First or second year jumpers will elect to stay in the barracks, but it gets old after awhile.

[INTERUPTION]

RG OK. I wanted to ask you if there was any particular aspect of smokejumping in Redding, California, that might distinguish it from other Bases in the country?

GJ Well, the... it's very seldom that we go a year, through a season, when we... majority of our fires are small fires. I think last year was a unique year. We did... most of our fires were 2, and 3, and 4 man fires. Normally, our small fires are early and late. And during the hot part of the season we'll drop whole plane loads on fires. You don't go out and just jump a real small one snag fire. It's usually 10 people or even 20 jumping, crew action jumps. And I... you know, you can say that's attributed to a little farther south, it's dry down there. That's another thing that's unique about California, is that our jumpers have to carry a lot of water and that affects what we have to carry on the airplane and how we set up our cargo. Because there's no running water. Get up to a place like this and about every draw or every other draw had water in it. But down in California, none of them have water in them. So you have...
to... anything you want... if you want drinking water, you have to take it with you. [It's a] pretty dry... pretty dry state.

RG Do you do very much para-rescue work?

GJ We've got some... we've got E.M.T.'s [Emergency Medical Technicians] on the crew. Not really very much. We haven't had that much opportunity to do... we haven't had any plane crashes, or that type of accidents, happen. But, you know, we can do it. We've got all... everything set up for it, the litters and all that, to do that. No, not a whole heck of a lot. You know, they... they've got other ways of doing it there. They've got a helicopter, C.H.P., California Highway Patrol Helicopter Base right there at the airport. And there's... there is a lot of roads, in certain areas. There's a lot of places that don't have roads, but there are a lot of roaded areas in Northern California.

RG Do you work very often with helitack crews in fighting a fire?

GJ No, not anymore than having them pick up our... retrieve our jumpers. As far as working on a project fire as a... you know, helping them build sling loads and making water drops, and stuff like that. No, not a lot. But we do, you know, one on one with them when they're coming in to pick up jumpers off the fire. That's probably all we do with it. We don't make any... each helitack, or helicopter in Northern California has its own crew and they're manned seven days a week with at least 5 people. We don't have to worry about supplying people for them.

RG Do you... the smokejumpers that are working in Redding, California, come from many different regions of the country or do most of the jumpers there come from California?

GJ Most of them come from California. We probably have, out of 40 [people], between 5 and 10, that are not from California. And they go back every winter to Oregon, or Ohio, or to wherever. But most of them are from California, and most of them have had California fire experience. We don't... we'll lean toward that if everything else is equal in hiring people. Everything else equal, and somebody's from back East, and somebody's from California, we'll probably pick the guy from California because he's got the kind of fire experience that he's going to have to have to do the job.

RG Right. Are there any thoughts or experiences that you've had during your career as a smokejumper that you would like to share hopefully and add to this tape?

GJ No, I don't think so. You know, a parting... if this is a parting, thought then I would like... don't want to see the program get jeopardized. You know, I think it... you've got a tremendous... nationally, you've got a tremendous pool of ingenious, intelligent, hard-working individuals that... it's a
unique outfit. You know, you can't find... it's a very complex job that's done, you know, as far as... especially safety-wise since everything's got to be done just right, by just the right person, to make everything work right without hurting or perhaps killing somebody. And it's unique that you can do that. You can take smokejumpers from Missoula, send them down to Redding, everything works perfect. You take Redding jumpers and send them up to McCall, everything works perfect. You take McCall jumpers and send them over to Redman... I mean, you know, it just... and that's a unique part of the business, and it's... in this day of cut-back management, I think that that ought to be a strong consideration. And that's... I don't want to see anything jeopardize the program, because it is... can do that kind of stuff for the Forest Service, and for the American public, really.

RG What could... what do you feel, is one of the biggest threats then, to the smokejumper organization in the future... that might jeopardize it?

GJ Well, what I don't like is, I don't like a bunch of folks that don't even know what the job is all about, and that's... it's people that are... that have a handle... like they're Affirmative Action-types, or they're Personnel Managers, or... they don't know one end of a shovel from the other, and they certainly don't know anything about smokejumping, and they're dictating to the... so to speak. Now this is just me! Personal opinion.

RG Right.

GJ They don't know what it takes to do the job, but they're trying to tell the people that do know what it takes to do the job, what kind of people it takes to do the job. And that's baloney! And it's... I don't know. I'll never get used to that! And, you know, I'm not going to roll over dead, I'm going to fight it as long as I can.

RG How much authority do people have over the smokejumper organization, now, that really don't know what it takes?

GJ Again, I can't speak for all the other... other Bases.

RG Right, just for Redding.

RG Redding, I'm kind of in a... we're kind of in a... green pasture, I guess. You know, I've got it pretty nice because my boss is an ex-jumper. He's a fireman from the word "go". And we think a lot alike, and I feel fortunate that I work for a guy like him. Because things that make me mad, make him even madder, so I... he's... he's... his hands are tied, too, when somebody farther up the ladder says, "This is what you will do. We don't care how you do it, or what it take to do, or..." Again... his hands are tied, too. So, you know, I do have it a little bit better. Now some of the other units, I can only go on what I
hear. And I don't want to say anything that's hearsay. But if what I've heard is true, I think I might... I don't think I'd be working for them anymore. You know, you've got a def... personal principles that... have to live up to. I couldn't put up with some of the stuff that I "hear" that has been going on.

RG  Well, I'd like to thank Gary for being here in Missoula, from California, and for taking the time to share his thoughts and experiences as a smokejumper with me. This is the end of this tape.

[END OF TAPE]