

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 133-073, 074**

**Interviewee: Bill Moody**

**Interviewer: Kim Maynard**

**Date of Interview: June 6, 1984**

**Project: Smokejumpers 1984 Reunion Oral History Project**

Bill Moody: My name is Bill Moody, [I] started in 1957. This is the beginning of my 28th in the jump program. So, been here at North Cascades and in addition to that, working out of La Grande considerably from 1957 to 1965. Rookied in '57 and became a squad leader in '61—spotter. Then training foreman in about, mid-'60s. Then base manager here in 1972 when Francis Lufkin retired.

Kim Maynard: Tell me about your first year—your first jump, your training and all that kind of thing.

BM: Well, naturally, like most rookies, it was far more difficult than what I had anticipated. I did have a year of firefighting experience on the Deschutes in Region 6, the previous year. We had 22 in our rookie class, and on the day after we completed training, we had a lightning storm in northeast Oregon, so I got a fire jump the day after training—rookie training was completed. [I] hung up about 135 feet and the highest I had ever been hung up. The jump rope was considerably short and fall and release to the ground about 10, 15 feet after the rope stretched. I got five fire jumps that year, otherwise it was pretty slow up in the Washington area that year.

KM: Any other significant ones that year, anything happen?

BM: Oh, we jumped one large fire on the Umatilla. It was about 40 acres and we initial attack—six of us. We were on it two days. We were released from the fire. As we drove away from the fire, we drove for a couple of hours, got down to Walla Walla. The fire had blown up, so they loaded us up again and we jumped the same fire just a few hours after we got off of it. Very hard landing. Right below—right at ground level, hit a pretty good down draft and we thumped in pretty good. We were jumping mainly 28 canopies then. They only had four 30-foot canopies that year and so most everybody, regardless of weight, would jump a 28 so a lot of hard landings.

KM: Anybody get injured?

BM: That year we had two injuries, those were both on training jumps. One on the first jump and a fellow on his third jump, both broken legs.

KM: Falling out of trees?

BM: No, just landing into the hillside on the practice jump spot. I think both—one I had, had a history of brittle bones through high school, athletic type injuries and has had several since that

time so I think it is more a matter of his bone structure makeup was probably a large part of that problem.

KM: Do you know anybody else who's still jumping from your class?

BM: No. I'm the only one left. Most have been gone for quite a few years. One that is jumping in Alaska now, Paul Sulinski, the old man up there, started here in 1959. I started as the P.T. trainer and first aid trainer in 1958, my second year. Then we had an airplane crash that year. Our Twin Beech crashed and killed three jumpers and a pilot, including a couple of the primary instructors, so I began as a rookie trainer in all the areas the second week of rookie training.

KM: Is this your third year?

BM: This is my second year—second year. Then I continued to be very involved in all the rookie training. Then Paul Sulinski started in '59, as this trainer and I had a good fortune of jumping my last fire in Alaska with him last year, a three-day fire up in the foothill of the Brooks and it was just a very sentimental reunion for both of us, being back together after a number of years.

KM: What was your first practice jump like?

BM: Well, like a lot of rookies, I didn't really have it all together. Pretty well psyched up and luckily, with the training that's instilled the first two weeks was ingrained enough to automatically react during the hookups and the exits and all the way to the ground. It's a lot of excitement and not remembering a whole lot, although it was very exciting. The thing I recall most is probably the silence and the rush of air descending on the canopy. It wasn't probably until the fourth or fifth jump that it seemed to all come together and make a lot of sense and felt a little bit more under control of my situation than the first few jumps.

KM: Do you remember significant things about your training itself, the whole rookie training?

BM: Well, rookie training again was just far more difficult than I had envisioned. We had—in a class of 22, which was a large class for this base because the base had 32 jumpers and four GS-7 squad leaders and one foreman, plus the base manager, which was Lufkin at that time. So, we significantly outnumbered the experienced jumpers and pretty much ruled the roost around here as far as the experienced guys, we threw them in the creek and harassed them quite a bit rather than the other way around. But training did go quite, quite well. Certainly, developed a tremendous amount of confidence in myself. As they put you to the different tests, physical and the emotional, mental and the skill development, I found out that I could do a lot more than I thought I could. I was quite successful in the PT areas. One of the strongest there, particularly in the running. Two of us were generally first or second in the run and that was very meaningful. But I had a very exciting and memorable rookie training time.

KM: How about your second year?

BM: Second year? Again, that was a very busy year here. We started jumping fires a couple days after we went through refresher training and I was also that year, started out as the PT leader and the first aid teacher, and then after the plane crash, the second week, assumed majority of the rookie training, which was good in terms of my career development. It gave me some opportunities I probably wouldn't have had and that helped me throughout the rest of my career because I was given a lot of responsibilities very early, starting that second year. In squad leader training then, that second year. 1958 was a very busy year around here. Most of the experienced jumpers had 12 of 13 fire jumps. I think I ended up with one or two rescue jumps in addition to that. A lot of the fires were in the Cascade Crest, so we were exposed to a lot of the—Mount Baker and a lot of the Wenatchee jump country, several times that year. And just, many very, very good jumps on the U.S.-Canadian border and the Cascades. Some of the most memorable jumps of my career, just from the standpoint of the country, types of fires we had, the long pack-outs, and different things.

KM: You want to go into more details about some of those?

BM: Oh, just that like any jumping, the Mount Baker, a lot of times your distances aren't that far but there's so much underbrush, and steep country, and deep drainages, and devils club, and other things that are kind of nasty that it just—any kind of pack-out there is very, very miserable. A lot of times you're a fair distance from any trail system, and once you connect with the trail system, sometimes you may get a pack string. Sometimes we would come down, like, in boats, to the trail or to the nearest road. But just mainly the dense undergrowth in that part of the country, that made packing out very, very difficult. We did jump one fire on the Canadian border near Lake Chilliwack and we found remnants of, I believe, some military paratroopers' jumps that had been made in there right after or during WWII. We found an old reserve and—

KM: No bones?

BM: No bones, just some discarded equipment.

KM: What was the longest pack-out you had that year? How long did it take?

BM: Well, part of it was with pack string and part cross country. It was 25 or 27 miles. That got us to the end of Ross Lake, and we had a boat ride ten miles on Ross Lake. Went around the dam and then we had another boat ride, another five or ten miles. So, in total we were about 40, 45 miles from the nearest road. At least the route that they hiked us out. Again, a lot of that was with pack string but part of it was cross country to the trail system.

KM: You had radios?

BM: We had large, very large radios similar to our PT 300, 400 radios now. The large pack sets—the 300-, 400-watt. That was the standard smokejumper portable at that time. They dropped them on a separate chute, on a usually 10- or 12-foot chute. That was not only the extra weight of the chute but also the radio and, usually, you only had one or two channels, so it was rather

archaic compared to what we have now.

KM: Could you get a hold of the airplanes?

BM: If they were within, usually, line of sight. But we didn't have as many repeaters on the mountains then and so it was a little bit more difficult. There was more remote areas, and quite often we didn't have enough radios to go around and so you depended more on signal streamer—signaling to the aircraft or observation aircraft at set schedules, you know, once or twice a day to follow up. So, you had to do a lot more planning and depended more heavily on the visual streamers which reduced, you know, the safety and a lot of the efficiency in the operation too.

KM: What were the rescue jumps you had that year?

BM: I'm trying to think, one was a lost hunter who, his partner came out in—this was during the high hunt and reported that he had lost his partner back there somehow and his partner was also diabetic and didn't think he had any insulin left and so on. So, after a couple of days they found the old gent up on a bare ridge and a couple of us jumped in before dark and bedded him down, and had some food and so on, and led him out the next day. I can't—I guess that that was the only rescue for that year, but most of the years we have about three or four rescues, and I'm generally involved in those, which we've had body recoveries, airplane crashes. Normally back in the wilderness it would be a recreationist involved in a horse accident, in a broken back, broken hip. I've probably had about 30 rescue jumps, that I've made here, not counting the helicopter rescues, above and beyond that.

KM: Do you want to tell more stories about rescue jumps?

BM: Oh, just that we have quite a few EMTs here. Years past, we didn't have nearly as many. Been involved in the, as the first aid instructor, I was usually called upon for most of the rescues. We had one in the mid-'70s where a horse—a fellow was on a very, very steep side slope and the horse rolled over about 100, 150 feet and rolled over the rider and crushed his skull and chest. His son was there with him and got word a Backcountry Guard and they called out and we found him the next morning and he was dead, so it was a body evacuation. We had one we jumped a couple of years ago, where a, another horse situation where a fellow was trying to coax his horse across a small foot bridge and the horse got a little upset and nudged him and knocked him off the foot bridge and he fell about five feet and anyway, on some rocks and broke his ankle quite badly. So, a couple of us jumped in there very late. In fact, it was, I think July 21, and we jumped about 9:25 or 9:30. We could see his light. We kind of knew the area. It was back in the wilderness and we kind of knew what was below us but—and we got in there. We dropped the equipment very, very high so it didn't endanger the aircraft. It was in kind of a pass. We put a cast splint on the person and took care of him that night, Demerol, etc. We had a military chopper in the next morning, at daylight and took him out. We had a body extraction, a climber fell into a crevice and anyway was found the fall of '82 and I'd been involved in the original search, so, knowing where it was, we jumped in and brought the

remains out.

KM: When did he crash?

BM: '77. In fact, I went in on the helicopter and then we took some jumpers in who had climbing experience and we worked the glaciers and the rocks and everything. We figured out that's—we figured that's where he probably was. We ran into some professional climbers from the coast, and they didn't want to descend into the crevices because the glacier is just too rotten, so [we] pretty much knew where the body probably was. Then [inaudible] of a glacier. In the fall of '82, the glacier had receded and then some wash activity and so on kicked him out the bottom. So, we hiked in, or jumped in, and then got up in the glacier and brought him out. Well, that same year we had a timber marker slip on some wet logs and supposedly have a broken back, took a stub (?) in the middle of the back. So, we jumped in and treated him for a broken back and transported him out to the road. Ended up, he got a very, very badly bruised spine—spinal column. I had a gal that same year that—climbing at night, had us—there were four that year climbing—and she fell and broke her ankle quite badly. We got word the next morning and somebody in the party, a climber came in at night and got her off the main rock, to the base of the rock. We jumped in and transported her about five miles with the stretcher and the Demerol again and brought her out. The first one that year was a airplane crash up from the very steep creeks up here and went into the creek bottom, through the trees, and about 150 yards from a ground—trail crew. They reported it and not knowing the extent of the injuries and so on, well, they called out and anyway we jumped just before dark on that one and ended up, somehow all three survived it with nothing more than a few sprains and broken ribs. The plane didn't catch on fire when it went through the trees, about 80-foot trees, and broke off and settled in the trees. So, it was a minor first aid in taking care of them and getting them out the next day.

KM: What year was this?

BM: That was all in '82. We had four of them in '82. Had a jumper fall out of a tree on the Mount Baker over in, near the base of Glacier Peak off the big west side tree and broke his back. Three lumbar vertebrae. So, Ash Court [Ashley Court] and I jumped in plus the fellows that were on the fire, and the equipment, and brought him out to a gravel bar on the Suiattle River. Got a helicopter just before dark and took him out to a hospital in Everett. Several of them just involving broken backs and pelvis. One other plane crash, just off the North Cascades highway, a Cessna 310 went in and was pretty well demolished. Eight of us jumped in there just mainly to check for survivors which there none. Both were killed and then a body evacuation situation. We dropped right in the bottom of the rockslides and the scrub timber and there it was kind of a bad jump situation. Each year we get usually three or four, either for jumpers or, generally, recreationists that are injured.

KM: That you have jumped on—did you jump on the jumper crash down in—

BM: No, we were in Alaska at that time. Siskiyou jumped on that. The one last year?

KM: Right.

BM: Yeah. One of the fellows here that transferred here from Redmond this year, was in on that.

KM: How about just more from...starting from the first years up, stories that you can think of, jumps that you made?

BM: Stand by, let me get my jump log, and I can be able to key my memory—

[Interruption]

Okay, one year was Gilbert Peak down on the Snoqualmie, down on the Tieton Ranger District. Just a two-person jump, and the jump partner went out in a poor position, caught his feet in his lines and was upside down and couldn't get right side up. Had about 300 yards drift and we just about touched canopies. I was heading back for the spot and he was heading away from the spot. He landed in, oh, kind of a little flat rockslide area and broke three vertebra in his back.

The plane—he thought he was okay. He put out a signal before I got to him and the plane dropped the cargo and took off so it wasn't until later—the day after the plane had left—that we realized that he had a broken back and finally we got some radio contact late in the day and got him out the following day. But he had back trouble the last couple of years he jumped and then and he finally had to quit jumping because his back was just too bad. Oh, Barton Heights was a jump down on the Amanaha-Snake District which is now part of the Joseph District on the Wallowa- Whitman. That's a late fall fire right on Hells Canyon. First time I saw retardant dropped. That was a B-25 drop, dropping a little borate. Being a little curious to what it was all about, this was the first one I observed, I got pretty well covered head to toe with borate.

Dugout Mountain, this was 1959, this was over in the Tonasket Ranger District on the Okanogan. We had a new pilot that year that wasn't too swift and we had a spotter wasn't too heads up in determining jump altitudes and when we corrected for the wind drift, we were flying into the terrain or flying uphill. I went—I was second man out, and so, thus I didn't get a good look at jump altitude coming into the final pattern and I opened up and had a half twist and before that half twist was out I was on the ground. So, we figured we had about 400 feet of—400, 450 elevation and those were with the old canopies without the D-bags. Just a 28-footer, just under a bungee cover. I go back one, to 1958. And this was actually the day that the airplane crashed. The date that the airplane crashed was June 23. Okay, that was a very hot summer. That day here it was 105 that afternoon. During rookie training, this was the beginning the second week of rookie training and we had a very severe thunderstorm, lightning storm, so it took all of the experienced jumpers we had and I was giving trainings, so, the last jumpers they would take would be the—most of the trainers so we went out that afternoon or actually early evening with the last regular load of jumpers which included most of us as trainers. We jumped up on Andrews Creek up here in the Winthrop District and during a very, very severe

lightning storm. Had a lot of serious down swallows, nomatice clouds, severe winds. When we jumped, we just opened and hit a down draft which took us right into treetops and they—the two jumpers in the plane—estimated about eight seconds. I think it was a little more than that, but we were just sucked down. We were using the 28s—FS-2s. And took us right into the treetops and then the down draft leveled out and I was in a little snag patch and I went through the tops of two snags and jumpers in the plane—I'd hit them right about the tops of my head. I'd just cross my hands in front of my face and I could just see stuff flying all over, and I went through two of those, sideplaned, missed a third and then I lit in about ten feet off the ground in a little fir. About that demonstrated the severity of the downdrafts because the fire that the plane crashed—was just the next ridge and about an hour later it dropped the next two jumpers in the Twin Beech, which was Roy Percival, who's now with BLM at Bifsy, a second in command at Bifsy, and the other one was Jim Wescott, who's over at Okak. They jumped the last fire out of that aircraft. The last fire was on Disaster Creek up in Lake Creek on the Winthrop District. Then the plane came in, refueled. They fueled the full mains, the full ox tanks, they had a lot of cargo that they were going to drop on another fire that we had jumpers and our rookies that had ground pounded to the fire. So, they were going to drop a trencher and chain saws, so they went out very heavy on fuel, very heavy on eq ree jumpers aboard and they made the first pass and made one drop. Came around on the second pass and they figured they hit a very severe down draft and with the extra weight and a pilot error, turning into a ridge, the plane went into a high-speed stall and crashed.

KM: And no one could get out?

BM: No one could get out. Just severe atmospheric conditions, high temperatures, overweight, and pilot error. A combination of everything. So, just the conditions are very, very severe that day. [Pause, looking through records] Oh, 1960, just I think a conjunction with four of my fire jumps, there were injuries where I ended up as—giving first aid to injuries as well as fighting fire. The season up here was very warm and dry, but most of the activity was in La Grande. That was the satellite of ours and we had a large part of us down there and a lot of jumpers particularly from Redding, Cave Junction, and here. Not too many Missoula jumpers in there that year. But we had a few bad injuries on fires there.

KM: With your jump partner or something like that?

BM: It was in...they were short on jumpers, so they were really just putting a couple of jumpers on large fires and they had four jumpers ahead of me jumped on a, what was then about a 100-acre fire on the Umatilla and the one jumper broke a leg. Shattered it right above the knee. So, I went on that. My partner and I jumped that to—mainly for the first aid rescue and then as soon as we got him taken care of, we stayed on the fire, which was then about a 300-acre fire. There was six of us for a couple of days, before we got any relief in.

KM: At that point you weren't using Demerol either, were you?

BM: We didn't have any Demerol on that particular, because the way things were stretched out



and we had somebody else's plane and we didn't have any Demerol but oddly enough, the fellow had hardly any discomfort. The jumper was Jack Wright. He had just gotten married that summer. He had been married just a couple of weeks and then he spent the next six weeks in the hospital in Walla Walla and he never did come back jumping. His injury was so severe that he never came back. Another jumper that same year, when we jumped the 4th of July on the Toketie Creek on Leavenworth. Jumped early in the morning. Hit some really bad air and came into a rockslide and dislocated four bones in his foot. That was extremely painful, and it took us most—the better part of the day, four shots of Demerol and we ran out of Demerol. We finally got him out just before dark that night and we barely got him out then.

KM: What year did you start using Demerol?

BM: Well, we had Demerol back in the mid-'50s. We just—so, we've had it pretty much, you know, the mid-50s on. We tried some Talwin and it wasn't very effective, so we got rid of the Talwin. [pauses] Oh, I had one other rescue here up on Delancy Ridge up on the Winthrop District. In 1966, dropped a couple of jumpers up on the ridge—very, very, steep rugged country. They made the initial attack and a shortly after the initial attack, about 20 feet of the top the tree burned through and fell out very silently and hit one of the jumpers. Johnny Davis was his name—a local boy. Collapsed his lung, broke several ribs, broke his arm, broke his wrist. Then a good thundershower came by and added to the problems. He was getting hypothermic and going into shock plus all his injuries. Finally, we got in there and we jumped during the middle of a lightning and hailstorm. Terry McCabe was the spotter. We had very, very severe winds and we finally got in and got Johnny out, oh, about 10:30 we got down to the road that night. Packed him out on the stretcher, through the rockslides and the downfall. This was on the North Cascades highway. There's just a pioneer road through there and we got down to that road finally. [pauses, looking through his records]. Of course, '70 was a big year around here and Francis will probably talk a little bit about that. In '70 we—was our biggest year and we had two major lightning busts that year, plus several minor busts and a good fall season. So, most everybody had anywhere between 12 and 18 fire jumps. A lot of the times the fires they were on, they were just hung up on fires between for four to six days and weren't getting back in rotation. But that main storm hit here July 15, and by the next day we had, oh, about 80 or 100 booster crew in here. That second day we had 186 jumpers. About 40 of those were ours and we wanted more jumpers, couldn't get more jumpers. But we were usually dropping around 100 fire jumps a day, which was good for us. We probably could have dropped another, probably 100 fire—600 fire jumps had we had jumpers. I started out spotting and then I—we got such a large operation here that Lufkin put me in charge of all the jumper operation dispatch. Then Lufkin took charge of the overall operation, which included about 25 helicopters working out of here and several air attack and several Recon Aircraft. We generally had about six, seven—the peak of it, six or seven jump aircraft. Normally we had four to six. Went for about three weeks and we're generally out of jumpers. We had about 4,000 ground crews come through here. Mainly to go to back country fires. Had chow here, we're feed about 850 people a day in the mess hall. We brought in FAA Traffic Controllers for 24 hour a day traffic. And we were averaging, 325 take off and landings a day. For this small airport, that was a lot. We had most of Johnson's aircraft, or Johnson's fleet in here—MDC-3s—Joe Madar and Moe

and Kenny Roth and all those folks in here all the time.

KM: Where were the fires?

BM: The July bust started mainly Lake Wenatchee, Lake Chelan, the Okanogan area, all up through both sides of the crest here. We had some over on the Olympic Peninsula. I dropped two Missoula jumpers over by Mt. Olympus. I dropped McCall and one of ours in the North Cascade National Park. Had one of our rookies, named Larry Hyde, who has since—was killed on a trucking accident, but Larry's rookie year, I dropped he and Michael Hill [Michael C.], who was jumping at McCall then. I think he's out of Grangeville now. In fact, I saw him in Alaska last year, like a little homecoming. Dropped them up in the famous tall timber of the Olympics and they both had 250 foot let down ropes. I spot them single, had about 300, 400 yards drift but steady and dropped Mike first, came right in the shorter—or the tall brush. Just a little hole there to get in. I dropped Larry, he got twisted up and he missed the spot by about 50 feet, but he was in an old growth, snag-top fir and his 250-foot rope was way too short. Mike climbed up and got over to him and helped him get down. We figured he was probably 280 feet up in the tree. Mike got him over and shared his rope and got him down. The chainsaw—we were out at Cresthouse Lake, in the middle of the fire bust, so the only chain saw we had left in the place was a Mac 153 with about a 24-inch bar and we whittled away at that. In fact, the chain saw streamered but there's so much growth and moss and everything, the chain saw was still workable after streamering in. But we had—later we had more fires over there and we dropped a 16-man Missoula load with Eiseman and some of the guys up in the high country of the Peninsula. The second bust was...let's see, we had 186 jumpers the first bust. We had a little lull there of a few weeks and then on August 23, we got the second major storm through. That hit more on the Wenatchee and hit the Entiat District. A little less up in here but several fires there went to Project 4800, Mitchell Creek down here. three fires grew together for 150-some thousand in the Entiat. Some of which we had jumped and were moved off of when they got too big. But we had 156 jumpers the second go around, and again, we were out of jumpers because southern Oregon was busy, La Grande area was busy. Other places were, but that lasted another three weeks, and we're generally out of jumpers that fire bust too. So, that was a grand season. I think out, oh, here we made 1,066 jumps. We probably could have made 1,700, 1,800 if we had enough jumpers. I can't remember—212, or so, fires here. Then with La Grande was still at that time our satellite, so they picked up another 200 to 300 fire jumps down there and were quite busy.

KM: Was that the busiest season you've seen?

BM: That was the busiest season here, yeah. That started early. We went to, just had the overhead train, so June 1 we went down to...or June 2 we went to Siskiyou, and we got three fire jumps apiece there. Came back up, got our troops trained, and we jumped our last fire about the first of November. It was a real busy, late hunter season—fire season. So, it was you might say it was the best season we had up here.

KM: That's pretty amazing.

BM: Yeah. We had Siskiyou up here, 40 some days that year. They were in here visiting us. That year my son was born. He was born on September 12th, and we had fires on both sides of that. I went off the jump list while he was born and then the day after he was born, I went on a fire and got back in time to bring the wife and son home, which was the day of our termination party. So, that was a double...Excuse me, no. That was the day he was born. September 12th was the rookie—or the termination party, so I had a lot of reasons to celebrate.

Oh, lets see. [pauses, searching through his papers] One of the jumps that was pretty exciting goes back to '64 and that was where I had a—jumping with Terry McCabe. Tony Percival was spotting. We were jumping up on the Twisp District up near the Loop-Loop and Jack Creek. And Hunter fire, November 1, very cold, very windy day, two jumpers ahead of us. John Lester [John M.] and Burr Sutterfield—they jumped the first fire. We had several fires that morning. Very windy. Anyway, they had a long, long, fast backwards drift. Johnny came in and came in backwards in heavy wind there and hit a log and split his helmet most of the way from the back to the front. Received a concussion, was unconscious for four or five minutes. He can probably give you a firsthand account of that, I think you're going to interview him. So, we had the next one up the ridge on Jack Creek, and on that particular one is also very windy and we're both jumping 28-foot canopies. I had a perfect Mae West, just a complete riser, right dead center in the middle of the canopy, which you can't shake off. I tried and I was descending very, very rapidly with McCabe yelling at me to pull my reserve. I was faced right into the wind. I threw it the first three times unsuccessfully. It would go out and just about inflate but then wind was so strong in my face, probably 20, 25 mile an hour wind. It was blowing it right back into the lines in the skirt of the canopy. Finally, I got just, coming up on treetops, and I had one more go at it and was smoking along pretty good. Threw it a little bit harder and got a little bit turned so the wind wasn't blowing it back into me and it caught right on the edge of the canopy—my main.

Then it fluttered and opened, and I was just right at treetops and I hit that ground wind and went through the edge of a pine. Tore off three or four lines off the main, and then lit on a old rotten log. So, we fought the fire that night. Woke up in the middle of the night, it was snowing. By morning we had four inches of snow on us. And hiked out and met a couple of hunters from Seattle and they gave us a little, snort of reinforcement to get our circulation going. We went back in the following day and retrieved some equipment. They just brought us out because it had snowed and declared the season over.

KM: That's pretty incredible. Have you had any other malfunctions?

BM: No. That's the only one. Only one malfunction. Only one accident.

KM: What was the accident?

BM: Oh, that was in '78. Actually, what I was doing there, we had quite a bit of activity and dropped some of our jumpers, Bud Clark and Missoula crew over in Glacier Peak Wilderness Area off of Lake Chelan. About nine and a half miles from the end of the lake. They have kind of

a nasty little show there in the rocks and trees. We dropped them quite a bit of extra grub and they had, oh, about a mile to go to a trail and then another eight and a half down to the lake to catch a boat. We dropped them extra food and extra equipment in, and anyway, rather than pack everything out, which they would have been very heavily loaded with wet gear and everything—probably everybody would have been, probably, a 120-plus pounds. They burned up the cans and crushed the cans and buried it about two feet down in the ground. Anyway, a very snoopy backcountry guard knew where the camp was, had visited the jumpers. When the jumpers left he went back in and sniffed around till he found some fresh dirt, and he went and uncovered all this stuff and brought back two cans of—or two plastic sacks of burnt, crushed cans—and put them on the ranger's desk in Chelan. So I got a nasty call from Chelan, from the ranger and I normally would jump in and usually check a couple of fires each year, and so, trying to console the ranger, I told him I'd go in with a couple of the guys—my guys that were here on the fire—and we'd look it over. The ranger was going to be up at the lake anyway, so that afternoon I'd meet the ranger down at the lake and kind of talk about it. So, anyway, we jumped in there that morning. It was about 5,600-foot elevation. It was in the shadows and a real nice jump spot. It was fairly, oh, maybe a 60 percent slope, whatever. But it was nice clean jump spot. It was, oh, about 300 yards drift and I made a run with the wind, got back in over the spot, made my turn about, got 250 feet above the spot, driving a FS-10 and made the turn, just hit a real good rush of that down air, that was on that shadow side in a basin. We was coming out of a turn and as—actually, the downdraft wasn't so severe—just kind of held me on my side for a good 150 feet. It just drilled me into the ground on my side and I took it right on my right side and there was a rock under the dirt right below my hip joint. I just accelerated from about 150 feet right in on my side and took everything right at that one point. As a result, I shattered my femur in about six or seven places. I gave it a little test, and it was just like a bunch of Jell-O. So, the other fellows jumping, there were five of us in total, and I just told them to drop the Demerol and call for the repel ship which is on that District and to get as close as they could.

Anyway, as a result of that, I headed back into Twisp, got a x ray and confirmed it was shattered. Went to Wenatchee and had surgery. Had a rod in the full—most the full length of the femur—a couple of plastic bands to hold the bone fragments together. I spent the next five and a half weeks on my back in bed there. Then I was able to come home and spend the next five and a half weeks on my back in home in a hospital bed, which I had put in the living room. So, a total of 11 weeks later I got on crutches, and I was 13 weeks on crutches. Also, as a result of that I ended up with an inch and a half of bone length difference in the femurs, due to the severity of that fracture and the overlap and everything necessary to get the thing taken care of. So I went in a year and a half after the fracture and had the rod removed from the broken leg and then in—that was in the end of August of '78 that I broke it—then in November, middle of November of '70...excuse me, of '82, I decide to reduce the possibility of lower back problems later on and a lot of stress I was picking up in lower back and knee and hip and so on, that I decided to get my leg shortened. One of our ex-jumpers was an orthopedic surgeon at Mayo Clinic and they told me about this particular operation and so it sounded good. So, I was willing to be an inch and a half shorter if I could be leveled up and everything. So, I went in November of '82, and they took an inch and a quarter, which was a quarter inch less than the fracture, our discrepancy, and they removed that and then had a full-length rod in that to my

good leg. Then in November of '83, I went in and had that rod removed.

KM: So you still have a quarter inch difference?

BM: An inch and a half shorter. Well, by the time it settled, the fracture and everything settled, whatever happens physiologically, I'm—near as they can tell—even on both sides now. An inch and a half shorter from when I started jumping. But—

KM: Great.

[Break in audio]

BM: Okay. Where are we here? [pauses] Just a couple of other interesting jumps, I guess. '74, in May, a private company was going to put in some private jumper operation in Northwest Territories and Yukon Territory. And it happened to be one of our ex-jumpers, Bob Henderson [Robert]. He jumped at Redmond one season and then he finished up at Missoula while he did his masters, the University of Montana. Anyway, he was the organizer of this company and was going to have this private jump corporation, or outfit, in Canada. So, through all this and in agreement, we trained his crew of about 14 jumpers, here, in April, '74. Then as part of this, too, we took a Forest Service Twin Beech and a couple of us Forest Service jumpers went up to Yukon Territory and put on a program for the Yukon Territory, Northwest Territory governments. Then we made some exhibition jumps out of Whitehorse, Yukon. Guess the other one would be in October of '76, Doug Bird [Douglas M.], who was then in the Washington office, now the Director of Aviation, Fire in Region 4. Ex-McCall jumper, and an interpreter, Alex Vasqalaveski. The three of us went to Russia for a month and toured several of the bases there. Both rappeler bases and smokejumper bases, in the northwestern part of the country.

Petrozavodsk, Leningrad, and the Moscow area. Then went to East Siberia for three weeks and visited bases at Irkutsk, and Ust-Ilimsk, a very small base way up north, of Lake Baikal. Kind of, on the edge of the frontier and then in Bratsk. While in Ust-Ilimsk, for the eight days, I went through their training program very briefly. Got checked out on their forester, their new parachute, which is basically, what our FS 12 is now. Because we took the basic designs from that and then incorporated many of the concepts into the 12. But while there, I made two jumps in East Siberia with—out of a Russian AN-2. One with all American equipment and the second one with all Soviet equipment, except my own jump boots, the only thing I had. That was probably one of the greatest experiences of my life and probably my professional career, was the opportunity that I had to represent the U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper Program and the Helicopter Rappel Program, because I was going through—doing all the rappel training with the Chelan rappellers, and [was] a qualified rappeler, and had made some operational helispot rappels with them up on the lake. So, I represented that particular part of the Forest Service operation. So, we were there a month, made a couple of jumps and got to see a lot of their country and a lot of their operations. That was a real highlight.

KM: What were your impressions?

BM: My impression's that it was a very, very well financed program. It's a very professional program. Probably the most highly motivated people I saw in the entire month I was there, were the foresters and then the jumpers—rappelers. Of course, I mainly associated with the forestry aspect of it, but the people—or the jumpers—are very, very gung-ho. A lot of them are older, of course, I [was] dealing more with the overhead because it was in October and a lot of their seasonal jumpers were involved in other forestry aspects. Though they're hired year-round, they're all state owned but they're in forestry, but at that time, some of them are in timber operations or insect disease operation. They just had their overhead squad leader-foreman type around. But they're very professional. I was very—thought that they're, had it together pretty good. They're very, very accurate in their jumping. Had some pretty windy conditions every time I jumped with them, and some of the demos, when I observed them.

Very, very good chute handlers. I say they seemed very, very highly motivated, although most of the attack in Russia would be by jumpers or rappellers. They had 2,600 jumpers and 5,000 rappeler Heli tack. And they had very good training programs. Their training equipment was very poor but seemed that they had a good training program and pretty good standards.

Seemed to be very, very effective in the job that they do. We left American equipment over there, and then the following year the person in charge of all of their aerial fire suppression forces in Russia visited the U.S. for a couple of weeks. Spent a couple of days here. Brought a complete set of Russian gear and then made a jump with us up in our practice jumps spot up here and then formally presented us with the equipment including the forester parachute.

Frank Sanders [Frank C.], and [inaudible] were very interested in that canopy and we were very interested in getting out of the FS-10 or the T-10 system, so they incorporated many of the multi-porosity concepts, some of the slot concepts, and other things from that incorporated into the 32-foot chute. Between the Russian canopy and their ideas, and so on we're into the FS-12, which is a significant improvement over any canopy we've had in the Forest Service system.

KM: Yeah, that's great. How was it jumping their equipment?

BM: Well, the whole procedure was different. It had snowed just the day I got there, so we were jumping in a couple of inches of snow, and it was very cold. Jumping an old 1930 vintage bi-wing, single engine, which is a tremendous jump plane. They can take six to eight jumpers and a lot of fuel. They can—six to eight hours range, but in all the aircraft they have jump doors. They have three primary aircraft. One like an F-27; one like a, probably, a DC-4, only a twin engine; and then this AN-2 bi-wing, which was one of the primary ships. And on their procedures, the spotter normally rides, co-pilot seat. Some generally fly right a right-hand pattern instead of a left. The spotter will normally spot from the co-pilot's seat and then this—the intercom—will tell a senior jumper, back in the doorway, to open the door and jumper to hook up, etc. So, here I was in a foreign country, the only person in the airplane that spoke English was Doug Bird. He was just flying along to observe the jump. He wasn't jumping. So, all I

had to do was just kind of key and watch them and figure out what was going on. [Interruption]. So, this particular first jump, I was jumping in all American equipment—FS-10, etc.—and it was quite windy from the signal streamers which I didn't...or the drift streamers. I didn't know how they were weighted and how they indicated compared to our streamers. But I figured it was probably pretty close. Anyway, the streamers indicated probably 600, 700 yards drift but it was all fairly open. It was a large field on the edge of some dense timber, in Nevins Field just out of Ust' Ilimsk. So, on all their operations, they keep the door closed until just before they want to throw streamers, then they open the door, throw streamers, run a right-hand pattern. Spotter calculates everything, gives some message to the senior spotter, who's aft, near the door. So, anyway, I could see where the streamers went and being a spotter, I pretty much figured out where the drift was, and how much, and what line up we would have. So, the Russian jumpers were the first couple out. On final they'd hook up on an overhead. They had a two-stage deployment system similar to what the BLM jumpers are using on their square system now. So, inbound, they were flying at about 2,000. That would give them about 500 feet to deploy the chute. So, inbound, they looked like they were lined up all right and just before the exit point, the senior jumper is given the message to open the door. I open the door and the two jumpers got in, and then on the next command, out they went and the door was closed. Just the door being closed and a right-hand pattern just made it a little bit strange. Then when I jumped American gear and same procedure. There were about 12 of us, I guess, that jumped that day. It was windy. They had an X out.

As it ended up, out of the 12 or 14 that jumped in total, between a couple of plane loads, one Russian jumper and I tied for closest to the spot. We was about 15 feet from the center of the X. I was very concerned. It was a lot of pressure. First, being in a foreign country and using a canopy that was inferior to what they were using, and not knowing their techniques. I was just praying that I would be able to uphold, you know, the American tradition and I felt rather competitive, and I felt I had a lot of pressure on me. Anyway, a long drift and I just opened and just drove her all the way in and made one last turn and hooked in and I was in there pretty close and so the Russki and I split the honors. Our interpreter bet against me and he lost a fifth of champagne on it. Served him right. Second jump, next day, was about as windy and I used all, again, all the Russian gear and their two-stage forester canopy and I went first man in that jump. So, it was just a matter of a four-foot static line and so you get an immediate opening of a pilot chute. It's about a six-foot diameter pilot chute to stabilize you and you fall vertically for about four to five seconds. Then you pull a rip cord and then that will release the canopy. There's a backup timer on it so that if you fail to pull your rip cord after a few seconds when you should of, why then it would automatically release the canopy as a backup. I had made a couple of free falls earlier, years earlier. But that was the first one—rip cord pull I had made in, oh, close to 20 years. Anyway, that was exciting, just to through that and then I opened up. Well, I was mainly concerned about making turns, so I was just doing a lot of turns and planes and checking everything out so I wasn't as close. I was, oh, 150 feet away that time [inaudible] or so but I was just mainly concerned about making a lot of turns and was in a very, very nice canopy, so I was very excited to see us getting into something similar.

KM: How did the rest of their equipment rate?

BM: They have a jump suit that is—basic concept is the same. It's a heavier canvas with some reinforcement in the ankles, and the collar isn't quite as high but it's not, doesn't have nearly the protection as our suits. It's not nearly as heavy of—they have kind of a K-pox material instead of an insulite. But it's, doesn't have nearly the protection. They jump in a, kind of a, pull-over type boot, rather than a laced, with an ankle support. But the jump country is quite easy. It's basically Alaska. Very, very little rugged country. So, it probably didn't cause that much problem. They very, rarely pack-out. It's like Alaska. Usually, the terrain is such that they try to get helicopters in and do the retrieval that way. But their protective equipment wasn't quite as good as ours. They did have a better reserve as a center pull reserve, which we are just going to this year and it had a pilot's chute built into it. Some of their fire equipment wasn't as good. The chain saws were much more bulky. Some of their hand tools were more antiquated, not nearly as good as ours.

KM: Did they use Pulaskis?

BM: They had a little short axe. It was about an 18-inch handle on it and a single bit axe on one end. Then they had a small shovel, somewhat comparable to our fire shovel. Then in most of that it was in a spruce bow trick. But they're very heavy into fire line explosives, and so every aircraft has fire line explosives on board, and every jumper is trained to detonate explosives. It's a very crude explosive. It's using dynamite sticks and prima cord, and so it's quite crude by our method, but they do a lot of it. They like to do it. I think they like the boom-boom and the excitement of that. But at least they're all qualified and it's heavily used. Usually, any flame length over 18 inches high, they supposedly—that's a reason—and they can go ahead and use it. But jumpers are used very, very, widespread throughout the entire country from the Northwest through the Southeast. They have an early season in March, which would be in the Southeast on the Amur River. Which would be just off the Japanese coast. Then the typical, you might say, Alaska fire season, from late May through middle of July. Then they have a fall season in the Northwestern and a late season again, back October, early November, back in the Southeast. So, they, make quite a good use out of their jumpers.

KM: This is basically kind of an information exchange in getting—

BM: It was, yeah. I was part of the U.S.-Soviet Technical, Scientific Technical Exchange Program. There's a group, before, that went over in forestry in general. Then they had a group the year before we went, looked at mainly Forest Service—forest protection with insect disease, fire suppression, etc. That's where they recognize this parachute, and also their rappel device as being very, you know, good delivery techniques. So, that was one of the two things that we were really supposed to look at, was the parachute and the rappel device that they used. So anyway, they just recommended that a jumper specialist go over the following year and I was fortunate enough to have been selected to go.

KM: Great, what an experience!



BM: Yeah, it really was! So...

KM: I had a question about, [inaudible], in 1945...I mean 19—I forgot what it was—the Mann Gulch fire, was the first jumper death. I just heard from Harper that in 1945, there was a Black Battalion and one of them fell out of a tree and was killed. Do you know anything about that?

BM: No, I don't. No, I don't—never did hear.

KM: Lufkin might know.

BM: Yeah, Francis might. Depends where they jumped. They made a couple of jumps out of here. In fact, when I went back to the Smithsonian last year, we had two of the 555th attended our talk and there going to be a bunch of them at the reunion this year. Back there, they presented me with an arm patch which I—one of the guys here is building into a plaque. I had some pictures—I obtained some slide through the Pentagon of the 555th suiting up and their airplane and some things. So, we're going to have those pictures and the RM patch and some recognition here. But Francis dropped...let's see, we dropped 98 of them back here on one big fire. 18 Forest Service jumpers, I believe and then the 98 of them. Francis dropped the quite a few of them right on the Canadian border, which is now in the wilderness. About ten percent were injured, severe ankle, leg, knee injuries. Francis can give you very, very good colorful account of that. Then we dropped them on another one. A second fire over on—called the Parks, which is in the Satan Wilderness—they dropped eight of them on another fire there which is a big easy jump spot there. I can't remember. I don't believe they had controllable canopies, and a lot of them were very spooked about the conditions, and so on, but—

[Interruption]

KM: Do you have any more from here?

BM: Oh, I don't know. Some seem more exciting than the others but those are probably the most exciting ones. Probably the best trip—the two best trips I've taken, was, of course, Alaska last year. I'd always been involved in—I was either the training foreman, couldn't go up, or then the other times we sent crews, I was the base manager and couldn't go up. It wasn't until last year that things were so wet here and they just decided to take all the jumpers out of here, so I was able to go and relax. I went up just as a jumper, no responsibility. Got five fires and it was just the best trip I've ever taken. It was just a really—that was actually another one of the highlights of my career was just that opportunity last year. Then in '81, I got over to Missoula in that August bust there, and I never got in a fire jump out of there because we did very little traveling. Then when we did get to traveling, I was again, either training foreman or I was running the base and couldn't go. I had an assistant who had kind of a bad back and they were pulling everybody over there, so my boss let me go and I got three jumps up in the Swans and up in the Bob. Very good fires all the time I was there, and that was maybe the second-best trip I've had. So, I still, obviously, keep jump qualified. It raises my moral and I feel I can relate to the program and the jumpers and the equipment. I think it just helps me do a better job if I'm

able to keep active and relate by—I'm normally fairly physically active anyway. So, I enjoy it.

KM: How did you get into jumping in the first place?

BM: Well, when I was still in high school, I worked in a Gippo Saw Mill and then we got on at the Forest Service. There was a couple of fellows quit, so we worked on the ground crew down at Deschutes in 1956. I lied about my age and got on. I just turned 17 so—and I told them that I was 18—got on at the Forest Service. Got some three or four fires that summer and then in the meantime, a good friend of mine in high school worked on the Snoqualmie-Mount Baker and that was a very busy year here. There was a lot of fires in the Cascades and so he was on two or three different fires with some jumpers out of here. That sounded exciting to him, so we were sitting in a chemistry class in high school in November. He said he was going to go up and apply for smokejumping up here and wondered if I wanted to go along. I said, "Oh yeah, sounds kind of neat." So, we drove up here that winter and we got on. That was basically it.

KM: Little did you know.

BM: Yeah, I was gonna teach or I was going to go through college. Probably jump three or four years and do whatever you do when you graduate from college. So, I did graduate as a teacher and I taught six years and continued to jump here. Even did some while I was doing some graduate work. I worked up here in the spring and the fall, and then when Lufkin decided he was going to retire, he approached me in '68 about quitting teaching and coming up and getting some intensive training under him. Enough to qualify me for the position so I could at least apply. So, I quit teaching after six years in Wenatchee, at Wenatchee High School. I quit teaching and moved up here. I was a GS-7. I was still the acting jump...or the training foreman, even before that while I was just seasonal. So then I moved in and he just, pretty much, turned it over to me with his, you know, he was overseeing the operation. Then when he felt comfortable that I had enough to be competitive for the position, well then he retired in '72. I just took over from him. No regrets getting out of teaching. [laughs]

KM: You've been pretty much all around the country then. You've were in some of those back East fires, were you?

BM: Yeah, I got...there again, I was, well, that operation—Region 6—was pretty much involved in that operation, '72 to '79, or so. I was running the base and I didn't feel right about leaving. I happened to be on a detail in the Washington office, in '74, in the fall, doing some things. They got pretty busy down...and activated the base, down in Lonesome Pine, down in Virginia. So, I went down there in the weekend and bought me a pair of jump boots. I wasn't very well equipped but I had a pair of cords and went down and finally found some boots big enough to fit me—some chicken hides down there in one of those little coal mining towns. And jumped a fire out there in the—I guess we got out over Kentucky and landed in Virginia or vice-versa. I remember very, very windy and right on the boundary and we had about a 30-acre fire and dropped an Otter load of us in there. That was another one of the highlights of my career.

Getting to jump back in the hardwoods. Then just getting to Alaska and around all the states here. I've been fortunate through my career to be involved in a lot of training and so, I've been to Alaska several times giving training and down in Arizona and pretty much around the country in different—details related to fire aviation and management and jumping and those things.

KM: What would you say the toughest jump you had?

BM: Well, the toughest to be packed out on a jumped, at that time, without an injury. That one of course, was that one where I had stretcher when I broke my leg. I had for about 22 years and had 383 jumps—384th caught up with me. So, that was a tough one.

KM: How about the toughest fire?

BM: Fire or fire jump? I think one of the toughest fires...I still have to think of. Oh, I can't think of any that have been—there have been a lot of, you know, tough jump spots and tough pack-outs, just mainly with the weight and cross country back in the Cascades.

KM: Nothing where you had to work 60 hours?

BM: Oh, we don't get in fires, maybe, as long as a lot of the other units. Had some four-dayers. We had one '70 over in Thunder Creek in the North Cascades National Park. I don't know if Ash Court mentioned that one or not. It's one that the National Park Service had abandoned. They thought it was under—pretty good shape. It was about a 600-acre fire. Then it got real hot and dry again just before the second big bust in August and the thing escaped control lines and was burning pretty good, so they dropped two Doug loads of us up on top in what was a little opening—a little helispot for a little G-3 B-1. Which is very small and a steep hillside way up and the jump spot—the decent landing spot—was about as big as this room. That's probably 12 by 15 or something and it's pretty—the rest of it wasn't good after that. I remember, Ash and I jumped together and I was jumping a -10 and he jumping a FS-5 at that time. We descended at the same rate and I aced him out of the spot. I got into the little spot and he had to turn to—instead of run into me, he graciously went over the cliff and into some downed junk on the ground [laughs] and he got back at me though. We jumped in Glacier Peak on the rescue. We had a similar situation, small spot and he bluffed me out and I landed 40 feet in the tree and he went [laughs]—he got on the ground and got even with me. But we're four days there and we had the 22 jumpers up on—where I was. Then they dropped, I think it was, 28 jumpers down in the bottom with another jumper—mix of R-4, R-5 and...excuse me R-4, R-1, and R-6 jumpers down there. They had just...we had a big line from daylight to dark. Then they were very cheap on the chow. They'd bring in one box of rations—actually three boxes of rations per jumper per day. They'd do this by the day, so you had to—no more, no less. So, we went four straight days of doing that. Finally, they brought in two people to kind of ride herd on the fire and we were getting real, starting to get busy again, so they brought us all off. It was a good fire. Most of the large fires—crew action fires—are hard work, but they're just a lot of fun because the moral is, really course, so high, and just working with the crew and seeing what you can accomplish.

Probably some of the harder fires have been down in Hells Canyon. They had a couple down there that ran about 2,000 acres, and it's just steep and hot and a lot of cheat grass, and just a hot, dry conditions, steep slopes. Just chasing a lot of fire. So, one—Eureka Creek in 1960—that's 2,000 acres, and I think, I had four or five jumpers on it.

KM: Two thousand acres?

BM: Yeah, we had a good, about half of it that we lined. They had some—brought in a bunch of skid-row bums in on the other part that night and took another part of it. But that's, again, where Paul Sulinski jumped in there with us, and he just about a one-man show—put out probably about two miles of fire line by himself. I've never seen anybody fight fire harder than old Paul.

KM: Digging?

BM: Digging and throw...Well, we had burlap bags there. He was just very intensive, incredible firefighter. He still is.

KM: Have you ever had any close calls? Had any major episodes with the fire itself?

BM: Yeah, I've been a few times where we had blowup conditions. One was on—I guess it was '76 down here on Entiat District—just a fire started along the road and eventually went about 13,000 acres. But they called us in just after it escaped and while we were jumping, the fire was working up one ridge and we thought we were pretty—we were going to be about 300 yards from it in this one opening and have a good attack and the wind was increasing, literally by the minute. When we got there, it was probably 10 to 12 [mph]. By the time they dropped the tankers and we jumped it was probably at about 20. By the time the cargo dropped it was about 40. So, each stick of us jumpers was carrying further but we were drifting further and a couple of jumpers just got in—hit in a tree and just got out. Within seconds after they got out, the trees went up. We retrieved quite a bit of the gear and got it up into a burned-out spot and left our gear there and in the meantime the winds were at 40—gusting 50. We left the gear and it burned over. We had to through part of an old burn and get up to a ridge is where they wanted us to start lining. So there, we just had to very carefully work through the stuff that had been burned out. Then I had to do some scouting, just ahead of the burn—one place where we could get under and get up to this ridge. It's just heavy winds and adverse conditions, but I...we were under control. It was pretty spooky.

KM: That was during the day?

BM: Yeah, that was during the day. There was just some others where you had some good blowups. You really had to be heads up, and it kept you on your toes. You just had to work around, and just by following all the training and everything, we weren't ever seriously in danger.

KM: Have you've done a water jump?

BM: Yes. Everyone here has made one water jump.

KM: Practice?

BM: Practice, yeah. Just practice and ironically, the day we made our water jumps up here it was a very windy day. We got a call over in Lake Chelan, which is a 55-mile length, in lake, and it's about a mile, mile and a half, two miles wide in places. Anyway, the fire was right on the edge of the lake and it was quite windy, so we were letting the jumpers out about, oh, 150-200 yards out into—over the lake. Then they'd come back in and they had about over a quarter mile drift so they were landing about 300 yards or better into the—they had a pretty steady prevailing wind. Yeah, I've done one of those.

KM: How about an emergency jump?

BM: No. I haven't had any emergency jumps myself. We've had two emergency jumps out of here. DC-3s, back in the mid-'70s, one was coming back from patrol and we were just northeast of here, up by Pearyginn Lake and somehow one of the hoses—the oil hoses—came off and the oil was spilling on the stack and just a lot of ugly smoke was coming back and dropping oil pressure and everything. They just feathered the engine and instructed all the jumpers to get out. I was dispatching, but we dumped everybody but the spotter. We came in and landed and then we had—

KM: What year?

BM: '74, '75. Then we had another one that was just the following year or two years later. A DC-3—the same pilot, different airplane. I can't remember—maybe it was. I think it was a different airplane that time. Maybe the same one. We out—down out of here—running, working fires and we had another sudden drop in oil pressure, and some other significant problem, where it was kind of precautionary and they had shut the engine down and instructed everybody to jump out. So, we had another eight or ten guys strung out down there. [laughs]

KM: Who was the pilot on these?

BM: Ken Kavin. If you get a chance, try to catch up with Ken Kavin. He's now retired, and he started here in '63. He's an ex-retardant pilot and a real, real character. But he was in the Redmond area and you might check with—

KM: Kavin?

BM: Yeah, Ken Kavin. You might call Regional Air Group. In fact, while you were giving your interview today, Dave Shass. Do you have his name? He's a Redmond pilot. He flew in that

Otter up here, but he's an old McCall jumper from '47, '48. Then after he jumped there, he flew for Johnson's, he flew for Intermountain, and then he went to work for the Forest Service. He was very, very colorful, and he just then dropped off those chutes and took off. I said—about the time he was taxiing out—I said, "Too bad we couldn't have rounded him up!" If you're going to Redmond or someplace, catch him—Ken—because he's an old colorful character from McCall in the mid-'40s. In fact, if you get to—Redmond would be a good area to go to because there are a lot of people from the '40s and some of the conscientious objectors that started here.

KM: I'd like to get some names.

BM: Jim Allen [James], Skinny Beals [David], Hal Weinmann. Okay, Hal Weinmann—W-e-i-n-m-a-n-n. Jim Allen, he used to head up Siskiyou Base, then he headed up Redmond Air Center and started he as Squad Leader under Lufkin [Francis]. He started in the '40s. Skinny Beals—David Beals, B-e-a-l-s. Quite a few others scattered down there, but they're some of the real old, old timers but they're not going to be at the reunion either, unfortunately.

KM: Oh, really?

BM: Yeah, they went to ours up here in '82.

KM: How about other malfunctions that you on fire were aware of here?

BM: Oh, we were doing a practice jump up on the hill, up here one day, and—I believe it was his first year—John Graw had a early major malfunction. Anyway, he finally got his reserve pulled a couple 100 feet off the ground. I can't remember if he was jumping a 28 or one of the early 32 footers we had, but—

KM: Just a double Mae West?

BM: Yeah, it was a...I wasn't here the day but I have had a slide of it. I stuck it in my collection someplace. It was either the classic "Roman Candle Streamer" or real, real serious maneuver. But anyway, I think it was a Roman Candle or a Roman Classic Streamer. Any rate, he got his reserve out not too far off the ground. Another real "Classic" was down at Redmond. A jumper that used to be here, Mike Gorie, and he was jumping at Redmond. In the old Twin Beech, our procedure was to go—had a pretty much vertical cable, something like the Otter. Procedurally you would go through a rubber band and then down onto the static line. Main thing—that rubber band was to keep the second...first person static line, the second person static line up, so it wouldn't encumber the second jumper. Any rate, you had to go through this rubber band to—your static line snap—snap in. Well, this guy, for some reason, didn't have it together, and he hooked into the rubber band only and not on the static lines—cable. He was on a fire, and I wasn't there but I was—the whole incident was reported to us. I think Hal Weinmann was the spotter on it, but anyway, Gorie jumped and naturally he didn't get any response and he went out with a trailing static line and of course the canopy couldn't come out. Anyway, for some—I

don't know how he got the word, rapid speed or whatever—but anyway, he pulled a reserve right at treetop. It opened right at treetops. He came in and sprained a knee or two, but that was in probably a second or two of probable death. [pauses] Probably the old thing you've heard about chutes was that up until about '62—at least '62 here—we didn't have any deployment bags and all the chutes were just in an accordion fold with the canvas bungee cover over. So, you strived very, very hard for good position. You tried to get a good vertical position. They was mainly slightly underpaced but if you didn't you got rapped real good. So, there were different times, or different incidents, where, if you got off on a shoulder, or upside of whatever, you would get lines deploying straight off your back, up against your neck. So, occasionally you'd get a line worked under your collar and guys would get neck burns or they'd get wrist burns—pretty serious ones—line burns. I dropped a jumper in '62, down out of La Grande—Larry Waldron was his name. He was a little bit psyched up anyway on the jump. It was a little bit windy, and anyway, he went out and got terrible position, got rapped real hard. He was knocked out on the opening and he—I remember because the other jumper went right in the spot and he was just going 90 degrees the other way hit a patch of trees down there.

Anyway, he woke—he came to just above the treetops. Anyway, in the process of being knocked out, he bloodied his nose and he had blood all over the front of his gear [laughs] and everything, and a severe headache. That's what happens with old canopies. Nothing like the eagle that some of these real old timers will talk about—bad position. You ended up with a headache and probably strawberries, ripped all the hide off of your shoulders, if you're down on one shoulder, which I've had that happen several times when I get off on a shoulder. Jumped one day and scabbed it up pretty good—just pretty good abrasion. Went out the next day and did the same thing and ripped all the scabs off, so I was pretty bloody up there. One classic—you may not catch up with this fellow, Jack McKay—rookied with me in '57. Terrible Jack was his name. Terrible Jack would get airsick, and we took our first airplane ride ever—a 10-minute ride a couple of days before we started jumping—and he got airsick on that 10-minute ride.

Anyway, oh Jack's first, I believe, his first fire jump down on the Umatilla, jumping out of La Grande, he got terribly, terribly sick in the plane and was trying to hold it and trying to hold it and coming in on final, he just figured he couldn't hold it anymore. So, on final, he took his chin strap off and barfed down the collar of the neck of the guy in front of him. Jack was going second; he barfed [laughs] down the collar of first man about the time the spotter was signaling. So, Jack stumbled out; second man opened up. [Jack] barfed when he opened up; lost his helmet [laughs] That was a real classic of Terrible Jack. Most every flight, Terrible Jack would get sick, and he'd fill up his hard hat and just...I remember once, he just filled up his hard hat and just threw the hard hat and everything out the door. [laughs] In fact, Ash Court, he probably didn't tell you, but he got airsick a time or two and upchucked.

KM: Oh, yeah. No, he didn't tell me that part. [pauses] Well, you've probably seen quite a few changes in the system?

BM: Yeah, quite a few. A lot, of course, in the equipment, going from the canvas jumpsuit and

those things into the improvements in the Nomex type jumpsuit. Going from just any old work shirt and a pair of jeans to the complete Nomex route, and then all of that.

KM: How about in personnel, the quality and the kind of people who kind of jump right now?

BM: Yeah. Of course, when I started, the majority—at least here, I think probably similar other bases—the majority of students were college students. Of course, there you had the heat of the draft. If you weren't in college, you probably would be drafted because that was just right after Vietnam and it was just before...or excuse me, right after Korea and right before Vietnam. So, the majority of the jumpers were college students and would jump three or four years and get out. So, you had a lot higher turnover than what you have now. Again, more higher percentage were college. Weren't interested in working the off season. I'd say a lot of the students—a lot of them then too—were probably had come from more, a background where they—at least at this base—a heavy recruitment for local farm boys. Lufkin knew them, from probably the time they were born on up, and he knew their character and knew if they were hard workers, or whatever. So, a lot of the jumpers then had, were pretty light on fire experience but, you know, had known qualities for hard labor and good farm boy sense. It wasn't really until '59, when they started changing the physical standards, and then started, after that, looking for required fire experience and general forestry related experience, that we began to evolve out of some of the local farm boys, and had to go a little bit more by fire experience and applications and so on. So, I saw a little bit of a change there. Probably the biggest change I noticed, was probably in the late '60s, when just the whole national atmosphere was—we became involved in Vietnam. More resentments, more concerns with personal rights, more reaction—dissent. So, we saw quite a change in appearance standards in the jumpers. A lot more were standing up to any kind of organized or any authority.

Resentment of authority. That was certainly questioned in the jumpers. They were questioning more, you know, why this, why that? Appearance, where we had always run very strict appearance standards on shaving and hair length and wearing apparel, and so on, this was being challenged. And as these things are being challenged, well, it came to light that the employer did not have the hammer anymore. That it was more, the employee was becoming more in control. I guess I was a little bit more into conservative; I grew up through high school, you know, and then jumping under Lufkin, that a part of me was a part of the old standard, as far as appearance and so on. Which I carried this into my management style. I was certainly challenged and had some hard knocks and some tough times, and when I took over evolving through that period, trying to maintain the old and gradually having to give that up, because we didn't have any support from personnel. That's just the way things were changing. So, I saw quite a change there. You know, that attitude was very, very difficult to, I think to, manage jumpers, to exercise the control which I think is necessary—the discipline is necessary, in a fire outfit. We evolved through that and I think we all mellowed. I think, the hardcore mellowed. I think the whole attitude mellowed. I personally kind of, realize where things were too, and started to work with it and kind of evolved through that.

KM: You think for the better?



BM: Yeah, I think overall, for the better. I still personally like to see things a little, you know, tighter on the—being able to hire and fire employees for work performance. I wish, I think personnel has gone way too far as far as leniency on poor work performance, and the documentation necessary to get rid of people. Because most people have been around picking their jump operation and you know when somebody's doing the job and not doing the job and they're a detriment and sometimes a hazard to the outfit. Sometimes the procedures to go through to get rid of them is just so lengthy and drawn out that it is, you know, hurts the outfit and everything involved. But I think through it all, evolved out of—I think appearance is getting better. I think we've—

[Interruption]

I think that overall, the jumpers we are getting now are far better qualified in terms of fire experience, and just general experience. We're finding most of the jumpers now are far better educated. There's still that balance of—in good hard work and common sense, and I think most the jumpers, for the most part, have that. I feel that really, as far as the smokejumper we have today, I think, is probably better in terms of firefighting experience, skill development with the chain saws and pump equipment and so on. Maybe not sometimes as strong in the hard work ethic, which I don't think in general, the American population is not where it was, you know, 15-20 years ago.

[Break in audio]

KM: This is Bill Moody here again, second tape. Can you tell me something about the development of, say, chute handling training? Has there ever been much change in that?

BM: That probably depends on the base. I'm not familiar with what all the bases are doing. Of course, the parachutes themselves have improved a lot. Chutes have more capability than chutes we had in the past. I think, from what I'm aware of, that most bases haven't made really a significant improvement other than the fact that we now have some slide tapes, which as far as the classroom preparation, I think, is much better here in the last ten years than it was prior to that time. Right now, with the revision of the National Smokejumper Training Guide there appears to be a lot more thought and concern over developing better lesson plans, which deal more with some of the basic aerodynamic theories, and wind line and this is—some things that are important that haven't been addressed, maybe, as thoroughly before. So, I think, training aid wise, it's better. I think, jumpers now seem to get more jumps than what they did in earlier years with the proficiency jump requirement. So, between additional jumps and some improvement on training aids, I think parachute manipulation is much better. Plus, the fact that we have more maneuverable parachutes. But as far as the basic ground training stations, it's—I haven't seen any really innovative, sophisticated means of instructing in parachute manipulation. A lot of it's still slide tape, experience, chalk talk, and that type of thing, to develop the chute manipulation.

KM: How about pay for jumpers? I know it wasn't till a while later they started having overtime and things like that.

BM: I know when I started, we got straight pay. No hazard pay. We would standby during the high fire danger and lightning activity. We standby on our own, just hoping that there would be a fire call and we could go on payroll. Wasn't until, can't remember, the late '60s or so, or mid-'60s, when we started getting into more paid standby, or paid standby. Also, I think the time and a half came in somewhere in the mid-, late '60s. With that, the hazard pay, of course, and the other differentials that we have now.

KM: So, at first you weren't paid at all for—you weren't paid until you were on fires?

BM: Well, we weren't paid until there was a fire occurred. This would be after—you might say outside of the 8-hour, 40-hour week. But there it would generally depend on—if it was a going fire, then the crew would be put on and suit up and you'd go. Or if there were a number of fires occurring and anticipating jumper use, perhaps we would be put on standby. But that was very seldom that we really got put on standby, unless we had a going fire situation.

KM: How about the differences between the bases—the different smokejumper bases? Was there much of a—

BM: I think there's a lot of differences in the bases, and I think each base has its own personality. I think a lot of times that attitude, or that personality, is a reflection, probably of the leadership in the past, and also the leadership at the present. Some different things that were a strong part of the leader's personality were instilled in the overhead and the overhead then in the trainees that they trained. I think that this has carried through in the attitude of a lot of the units. I personally feel that a lot of the...or not a lot, but some of the bases have not really reached their full potential as far as, what jumpers can do. I think we've tried to have a philosophy here that we would go out with a "can do" attitude and that we're going to get the job done, and we very seldom abort a fire—maybe a couple fires a year. But I still don't think that we have jeopardized safety. I think jumpers are probably capable of jumping in more adverse conditions and working under more adverse conditions if they are—if that's instilled. A part of the, might say, unit philosophy. Instilled through the training. Of course, it has to be brought down through the years, but I don't think that all the units, probably, have reached their potential.

KM: Can you describe a little bit, the differences, say, between Redding, Redmond, Winthrop, Missoula?

BM: Well, I think a lot of it too has to do with, maybe, with size and there's a certain advantage to being in a smaller unit. We have always been, you know, relatively small to a medium size unit. I think you're able to develop a lot more esprit de corps and a closeness within the crews and maybe a higher level of pride just because of size. A lot of it's just numerical. I feel that we've traditionally had a very high esprit de corps and I think, high performance here. I don't

know, a lot of the other bases that well. Most of our exposure is when they come up here. A lot of people don't, certainly, don't like our jump country. A lot of people feel that we jump under too adverse conditions. But I think that we're just probably working at our potential and not less. A lot of it, too, I think's, a matter of, probably the jump country—probably another factor that has a lot to do with the attitude of the unit. We have some very, very rugged jump country in the North Cascades and that's the environment we have to operate in if we want to stay in business. So, that has probably shaped a lot of our attitude toward the adverse conditions because we didn't operate here, we wouldn't exist. So, perhaps we've, through the years have pushed it and tried to work effectively in the environment, just to stay in business. Some of the other units have some, maybe, small portions of the jump country that's very adverse, but I don't feel that most of them have the large area that we do, as far as adverse environment.

KM: How has the jumping changed in the—with respect to the Forest Service? How is Forest Service changed their view of jumping over the years?

BM: Well, probably in a couple of ways. I think the original concept of jumpers, was more for backcountry use as opposed to, you might say, low country, or near the roaded areas. I see as we got more jumpers and as philosophies changed, that we began to use jumpers wherever they might be an effective suppression force. If that could be right alongside a road, or if it could be mixed in with other Heli tack, propeller, airtanker resources, well...And if that was effective in controlling the fire situation, well I think they just started using jumpers wherever they could be effective. I see, that has changed over the years. I see that the use of jumpers depends a lot on the attitude of the FMO—perhaps some personal bias that they may have. Prejudiced, in favor of their own ground forces, or Heli tack forces. So, in some areas I see, you know, there has developed a very, very positive recurring use of jumpers. Others, it's been up and down depending on the mindset of the FMO or the forest, or I mean, perhaps even the fire staff. But overall, I think the jumper is well received. I think the skills are recognized. I think they see, now that the jumper is—can be valuable in more than just digging line and falling snags, but that there's a lot of experience in the jumpers and I think they're depending more and more upon them in the fire organization throughout the year. Then giving them overall, more responsibility on larger fires, just to take advantage of the fire experience and skills that the jumpers have. So, I see, really an overall increase in use overall, compared to, maybe, 20 or 30 years ago.

KM: Can you give kind of an outline of what kind of people get involved in jumping—if they're a common line?

BM: Well, I think the common thread seems to be the quest for some adventure. I think those that are willing to make, more willing a physical sacrifice. I think although pay is important, pay is probably a very secondary incentive for people to get into the jump program. Basically excitement, looking to travel. I think it's an opportunity for them to challenge themselves and they recognize this. I think a lot of them tend to be a little more on the independent side than perhaps followers—more strong willed. Overall, I see the average jumper is probably intelligent although there are continually jokes about the mentality of a jumpers for jumping out of

aircraft. But I think that we see the jumpers are intelligent and highly motivated, independent, like a challenge, and certainly do like the adventure.

KM: Has it changed at all?

BM: I don't think it really has changed that much over the years. I think you have basically the same type of person that enters the program and stays in the program. This is due to the, perhaps, getting their college degree and getting married, and different things, probably have taken a lot of people out of the program that would, personally, liked to have stayed in the program if their circumstances were a little different.

KM: What do you think is the main reason why people leave?

BM: Well, I think it's probably looking at the career options, depending on their personal values—if they're looking for a year-round career opportunity, if they happen to get married, probably looking more at those things as you mature, wanting a little higher level of security for themselves and for any family. Then just aren't the opportunities. Probably, also, it becomes physically demanding. You have to be willing to make that sacrifice and discipline yourself to stay in shape and take the hard knocks and the hard pack-outs. I think the average person, probably does not want to discipline themselves physically, you know. After four or five years it's—would probably be another factor which discourages a lot of people from staying in the program. But I think career opportunities, because there is just a limited number of positions at the -7 and the -9 level and aren't any level above that. So, the combination of getting a degree, looking at bigger bucks, security age and physical aspects, are probably the main reasons.

KM: During the years of jumping, say, a jumper jumped for five years or so, what kind of skills you think they'd develop over that time?

BM: I think probably the greatest thing they would gain, perhaps it's a little intangible, I think it is the self confidence that they build in themselves, and certainly the discipline that they've gone through to become a jumper and stay in the jump program. So, I think that it's an intangible part of their personality that is developed. That seems to give them some real plusses and I think sometimes some advantages in anything they do in the rest of their life. It's just a real pride. Because I know a lot of the employers are—prospective employers that call here seeking references, if we have an average jumper, or a good jumper, amongst the applicants, it seems like they always get the job and the employers generally very, very pleased with them, just mainly because of the type of person that they get. So, I think that it's that.

Certainly, the confidence they build. If it's a job that requires physical ability, certainly that's something they gain through this. I think they gain a lot of opportunity to exercise judgement, which would help them in any pursuit of life. Just basic decision making. Then for those that might stay in forestry related program, or whatever, they certainly gain the skills with the tools and the fire knowledge, the weather knowledge, just all the things that are incidental to the smokejumper job. But probably the greatest thing is just the maturity—finding themselves in a,

the development of a very strong personality.

KM: At one time, was it true that jumpers tended to cut more helispots and get lifted out instead of packing out, until they found out they weren't getting quite as many fires because Heli tacks were taking what they once had because of the helispots that they cut?

BM: Well, I think at one time, there was jumpers, you know, looking for any opportunity to exercise the profession. That being jumping, and at one time there was quite a move to build helispots and a lot of those would be developed by jumpers. So, in the short term it gave them some opportunities to pick up some jumps and some good experience. And I think there was a little extra zeal and desire to do that. As a result of that activity and in subsequent years, with the increase of helicopters, the jumpers did start to see that a lot of the helispots, that they constructed, were now going to be used by an alternate attack force, and probably decrease the use of jumpers. In terms of on the fires themselves, as far as alleviating pack-outs, I don't think that probably at the time that was the most expedient way to get jumpers and they were probably instructed to come out that way. So, as far as fire use, they didn't really have, probably, too much opportunity to make the decision to build it. That was made pretty much for them. I say, probably the biggest thing would be in the Helispot Construction Pre-attack Program is where probably jumpers were maybe little short-sighted but still they were requested to perform a service and didn't have too much option, really, to turn that down. But now, with the decrease of helicopters, and particularly in the high country where they're more concerned for environment and impact on the environment, we've seen quite a decrease in the construction of helicopters—or helicopter landing sites.

KM: Going back to the pay thing. Jumpers always been a GS-6, -7?

BM: -5, yeah, -5s, -6s. Then most of the supervisor starting at -7s, -8s, -9s, -10s, and -11s. I don't know when that rating started. Certainly, when I started, the '5s and '6s were the primary GS rating. I don't know if anything lower than that.

KM: How about the permanent WAE kind of thing? Is that been developed or pretty much stayed the same?

BM: Well, it's gone through a cycle here. We had, for a couple of decades at least, just the squad leaders', foreman, on long-term WAEs or PFTs. In the mid-'70s, I instigated a program here to get eight, GS-6 WAE positions at 1313, which the forest bought off on at that time. Dollars were not as critical nor full time equipment, ceilings, and that type of thing weren't really a concern then. So, we had that program for five or six years and then with the base studies and reduction in forces here, and tighter dollars. Tighter ceilings. As those positions were given up through attrition, the forest elected not to replace those WAEs but to go back to temporaries. I would very much like to get back into at least, 25 percent or better of the crew, on WAEs. There's certainly advantages there, and it means a lot to the jumpers to get that career conditional. Many bases do. We've gone the cycle. Right now, in Region—I think there's one GS-6, WAE at Redmond, and I think that would be the only one other than your GS-7

positions on up.

KM: And none here?

BM: None here. Just the overhead, or the—it would be the PFT or the long-term WAE.

KM: How about the territory covered by jumpers? Has that been reduced at all?

BM: Well, as far as the area covered, in many respects, it's probably increased as—through the years, they saw the advantages of jumpers, as far as rapid initial attack. Particularly as they got into faster aircraft, greater range, increased our overall distance of initial attack, at least in this region. However, at the same time, within that general coverage area, we are seeing now, different fire management policies—confinement fires. In the national parks we covered, they have gone essentially to a confinement, and prioritizing their fires. Some low priority fires—high country—they don't take attack on. So, just with the changing fire management philosophy, we've seen a, probably, reduction in the overall use of jumpers, or of any type of a fire suppression force. The only time would be—exception to that would be, when you have very high fire danger. When they pull the plug and they start suppressing everything. So, I think with the increase in the overall coverage area, being involved more in interagency agreements, we see, you know, an overall increased opportunity. And probably with the reduction of area, with confinement, containment and so on, it's probably going to balance itself out. I think we still over all seen much heavier use of jumpers than we did say, 15, 20, 30 years ago. I think the jumpers are probably getting more fires per year. We see more interregional mobility and interagency mobility with the BLM in Alaska and so on. So, if there. If we have any kind of fire season, jumpers generally going to be more active than they ever have been.

KM: And jumpers are going to travel further—cover more?

BM: Yeah. Actually, they're going to be—probably, we're seeing a reduction, certainly, of jumpers in this region. I think we'll see that nationally. I think the feeling there is that we're just going to have to do more as far as mobility. With all the different agreements between agencies, between regions, and philosophies, that—the fewer resources are just going to see more action and be far more mobile. So, those that are remaining in the program, have the potential there of getting a lot more fire activity and experience and making more money and all those things than probably what they've ever had.

KM: What's the farthest jumpers have gone from here?

BM: Well, Alaska and then back in the Appalachians in Region 8. Right now, we don't have any regular detail program. This region had the Region 8 detail and that ended in 1979 or so. Currently we don't have any program that we're a regular detailer. I hope in the future that the region would involve us in some type of a recurring detail program so we can get our people out, get them more exposure, give them some incentive, and get in on the good deals like the rest of the bases.

KM: Do you feel like you kind of lose out on some of them?

BM: Yeah, we feel that way. We particularly felt that way up here with—since the base study and before the decision here last month to keep us around. We felt very discriminated against, and it had a very, very definite negative effect on moral on the last, probably, five years. Not knowing if we were going to be here, or not. Subsequently we were to that decision five years ago that would—looked like we would be wiped out. We were kind of a forgotten lot up here and missed out on a lot of the traveling and trips and things that some of the other bases were enjoying.

KM: But you think that will change now?

BM: Yeah, we're optimistic. Looks like we're solid now for the future and increasing the crew. We've already seen a tremendous increase in attitude in the folks here.

KM: How about things like change in living quarters, and that kind of thing, over the years?

BM: Well, unfortunately, the quarters haven't increased—haven't changed much. The bunkhouse up here is the same bunkhouse that I stayed in for 10 or 12 years. And we at one time had hoped to replace that with new quarters. We had drawings on the board and everything. This was just prior to the National Base Study. This would have involved relocation of the office, a brand new paraloft, new crew quarters, some new training facilities. But then with the tight dollars and the base studies, and particularly the tight dollars right now, we do not see nor have anything planned for capital improvements at this base. So, they're not very fancy, but I guess it's part of the price of, maybe, being able to stay here instead of having to close the base and move someplace else.

KM: Did most of jumpers live in the bunkhouse during that time?

BM: Usually, when we had a crew of 40-45, we normally had about 20-25, normally, living in the bunkhouse. But that's nothing that has changed over the years. I first started, as I mentioned earlier, that most the jumpers were college students. Most were probably anywheres from 19 to 21. Most were not married. So, that has changed. We find that the average jumper now at this base is probably 28, 29. We find that a majority are married or have friends they're living with. Then we also have most of them living in town, under those circumstances. So, all in all, it's just resulted in very few people staying in the bunkhouse, compared to years past. Just due to the older age and marital situation, and so on.

KM: That hasn't affected your readiness?

BM: No, it really hasn't. The jumpers here keep pretty close tabs on fire weather. Are good about signing out. We do get some calls, like all bases, you know, before and after work hours but there are generally enough jumpers here. By the time I get the call at home, I have people

coming. By the time I'm here and the pilot gets here, we normally have a crew here ready to go. So, it hasn't really affected it too much. If we do have imminent activity from a storm at night, those jumpers who, maybe, live in the next valley over, or in town are generally here, ready to go—anticipating action.

KM: How about the techniques in firefighting itself? Has that changed at all?

BM: I think it's—basically, with the jumpers, it's the Pulaski-shovel show. Probably the biggest change has been in the use of chain saws. Of course, we had three chain saws on the base when I started. We did a lot of crosscut falling and bucking. Now we have about 40 saws and so, probably 75, 80 percent of our fires we drop chain saws. So, just increased use of the saw, which, makes the crew more efficient. We're able to be a little more effective in our line construction. Not too much there—I just think, overall, firefighters or the jumpers now are better firefighters as far as fire knowledge. They have a better understanding of fire behavior, maybe, strategy and tactics and, maybe, overall are better to conduct a more effective suppression effort than years before.

KM: Due to partly increased training?

BM: Yeah, increased training and increased experience prior to coming on base and. I think the other thing, too, is just working with some of the other resources. Working with airtankers to become a more effective tool. The jumpers have an understanding of airtankers and maybe helitanker—airtanker support—and they're able to work more effectively with those resources to complete the suppression task. So, all in all, I think the fire suppression effort has been upgraded considerably over the last few years.

KM: No more trenchers or—

BM: No. I think the trenchers have a real place, just with the type of aircraft and for various reasons, we evolved out of it. But the Hoffco flail trencher was a very effective tool, or is a very effective tool, and some of this ponderosa pine, sweetgrass, low country environment we had to make some tradeoffs with type of aircraft we were using. We didn't have the DC-3s and some other large delivery, capability aircraft, that we had in previous years. So that's one decision we made—just to not routinely carry the Hoffco. We haven't used it for a few years. But I think trenchers are fine in a certain environment. Fire line explosive has some real potential use in some of the regions. In Region 1, Alaska, have been involved in this program. I think there is some real merit in that program, and I think we will probably see more use of that in the future.

KM: How would you pack the trenchers out?

BM: Just we would break them down. We had two different types of—well, there are actually three different types of trenchers. The old Mary (?) digger, which is a 700-pound unit. Generally, when you drop that you are looking at a helispot or else you just have to walk it out



to where the pickup point. You could break it down to three different pieces. We dropped it usually in three different pieces. The Hoffco flail trencher, which was much lighter, we'd just break down into two to three different units and divvy it up. Then the Mcculloch (?) trencher, which had an auger head on the end of a, essentially a chain saw bar, could also be broken into two different parts and then carried out. A lot of extra weight. So, that's one reason jumpers were a little reluctant to use it because they knew they had to pack it out.

KM: You don't use them at all?

BM: We haven't. No, we haven't, the districts they're still used on some project work for, but we haven't use any on fire here for quite a number of years.

KM: If you had to pick your best fire, which would it be?

BM: Best fire. Oh, one that always, kind of, stands out is the one down on the Gifford-Pinchot on the Packwood District in '67. Which eventually went 600 acres. But there was five of us on it that afternoon through the next morning. It was just in very, very, tall, beautiful, mature, West side fir. It's just that we had a gallant effort all afternoon and all night long into the next day building line and losing it, that I—until we got a lot of reinforcements and a lot of loggers in and some more jumpers. Kind of stands out mainly from, I guess, the beauty and yet the sadness of seeing that type of a resource being burned up—this classic large fir. Probably another fire—a couple of fires I really enjoyed. One was in Region 1 in '81 up on the Bob Marshall up by big Salmon Lake. It's only about six-tenths of an acre but it was a good jumper show, and it was pretty environment. That one—probably my first year—one my first year, down on the Umatilla, in the Pomeroy which was 180 acres with just six of us building a lot of line for a couple of days. We could see a lot of accomplishment under some very adverse conditions, and being one of my early jumper fires and then being a large fire and the crew action with a lot of accomplishment, was one I—usually stands out.

KM: Have you ever thought of leaving jumping?

BM: Well, I did very, very lightly, back about my second or third year more or less thinking that the average career is about four years, you graduate from college and that's it. The closer I got to college graduation, the more difficult that decision became. So, from that time on, no, I never have. I guess I never have really seriously thought about that. Although I thought for quite a number of years, I'd just be a teacher and a summertime jumper. Then, when I had the opportunity to come up full time and compete for the base manager job, well, that pretty much convinced me that I was going to be a lifer. The only one other change I saw was a few years back not knowing what the status of the base would be in the future. I looked seriously at MEDC and the Smokejumper Equipment Development Position. In fact, that's the only position I ever put in for, realizing that if I did get it, I would be in Missoula. I could still keep active in the jump program, which is something I want to do until I retire in five years, is to stay active. So, just a couple of jobs I've entertained but any alternate is always involved—quite an involvement with the jump program.

KM: Do you know anything about the balloon—Japanese balloon fires?

BM: Somewhat. I have some, one, of Francis Lufkin's newspaper articles, which was an original article and I have some written material in my file. But there were, I believe, something like 700 balloons that did land in Oregon, Washington, and—mainly in Oregon and California. Of course, there was one that landed in Southern Oregon, on the Freemont, that was found by a picnic group. It was detonated and killed one or two people. One of them, I believe was a minister in Southern Oregon. But it was big scare. It certainly had some potentials, more than psychological warfare than probably realistically inflicting serious resource damage, but it did give a lot of impetus, I think, to the jumper program, and as a force to—for rapid initial attack, to combat that particular problem. I do have some information on how many thousand were deployed from Japan and rode the wind currents to the West Coast. A surprising number did land, but I don't believe there was ever any serious problem from ignition. I guess the one problem again was the one that exploded and killed the person or persons.

KM: So, they were little bombs?

BM: They were actually an incendiary-type bomb that would explode.

KM: Do you have any other stories of people, that you've heard coming back, about, particularly the animals—snakes, bears?

BM: Oh, yeah. Probably the one I recall—in the mid-'70s, we dropped some jumpers down here in Lake Chelan. The lower part has quite a few snakes. The fellows were packing out early that morning, about 6:30. It had rained during in the night, so things were pretty damp and cool. Hiking down the trail and one jumper did not notice a coiled-up snake and stepped in stride right over it and his partner happened to be looking down, following closely behind and was just about to step on the snake—with pack and everything, made a great leap in stride.

Unbeknownst, the snake was so cold and miserable, it couldn't possibly strike, but he did a good job of scaring them. The same jumper, or jumpers, were running down the hill behind here that same year, and running early in the morning again and stepped on a snake up here—a big rattler. But it was also so cold it couldn't do much. They killed the snake and hung it in a tree. I remember the magpies or something got it out of the tree and it ended up back on the trail and, I went running by and about stepped on it, not knowing it was a dead snake and it scared me severely. [laughs] But no, just some of the jumpers in Alaska last year had some bears near their fire and they had to use a jump plane and later a helicopter to, kind of, run the bear off. We hadn't really had any significant animal stories that I recall.

KM: How about particular personalities that have come through the jump base here?

BM: Well, that takes some recall and like any base there are any number of characters. Kind of hard to go through. The one I mentioned, Terrible Jack McKay, the one who barfed down his

jump partner's neck. He was certainly one. [pauses] I'd about have to go back and go through— just a lot of typical characters and strong personalities and so on. But I can't think of anything that was all that significant.

KM: Anything else that I've missed? Kind of, things that you thought of in the past couple of days?

BM: No. Not that I can think of.

KM: Okay, great.

[End of Interview]