

NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

December 2018



2018 NSA Trails Program Volunteer of the Year (VOY)
Bob Whaley (MSO 56)



Joe Kroeber (MSO 62)

The NSA Trail Crew Committee (aka TRAMPS) has selected Joe Kroeber (MSO 62) as the 2018 Volunteer of the Year. Prior to his '62 rookie year, Joe started with the USFS in 1961, a high fire year, on the St. Joe Forest on blister rust control. His crew was on 7 fires that summer, which served as an appetite whetting for a future wildland fire endeavor, which found Joe in the jumper program for 12 years, accumulating 125 jumps and working fires in 8 states. He jumped in Grangeville, ID in 1963 and Silver City, NM in 1964, but his best year was in Alaska in 1968 with 19 fire jumps. Joe was Squad Leader in MSO from 1966-70 and again in 1972. He didn't jump in 1971, but was engaged in the parachute loft, "tolerating" the tutelage of Hal Sampsel (MSO 49) and Jack Nash (MSO 42) as he pursued and obtained his Master Rigger Certificate. Joe had what many of us dreamed of when he was selected to participate in the Retread Program when asked to come back in 1985 and 1986 with Larry Eisenman (MSO 58) to train and return home to await a call for those fire seasons. This resulted in 2 fire jumps, each year.

Joe had an interesting career. He's from Jamestown, ND graduating from Valley State University in 1965 with double majors in biology and health and recreation and earning an MS in education from North Dakota State University in 1969. He earned certifications with the National Athletic Trainers' Association and National Registry of EMTs and certification for CPR. He coached and taught at Jamestown High School 1970-91 and taught anatomy/physiology part time at Jamestown College 2002-2011. He holds credentials for Secondary School Principals level instruction. He served as a State Representative in the North Dakota House of Representatives for 20 years, retiring in 2012. I mentioned at one time to him that he had to retire since most of his friends or relatives had either died or moved out of his district!

Joe's been a busy boy and a standout in the NSA Trails Program, having participated every year since the inaugural start in 1999 when started by Art Jukkala (MSO 56) and Jon McBride (MSO 53) with the first two projects in the Blackfoot Divide area of the southern Bob Marshall and the Spotted Bear up north. That's 20 years, folks, and Joe has made every one of them having served as cook and "doc" on nearly all. His training and medical awareness was of note on the very first project with Art when we embarked out of Monture Guard Station on a glorious 1999 July morning followed by a tragedy at the end of the first day when Art collapsed with a massive heart attack in camp. Joe ran to Art's aid and he and I began CPR but to no avail. After putting a game plan together for a helicopter retrieval, the two of us hightailed it back to the trailhead (which took about 2 hours vs. the 6 or so going in) and back to the Guard Station where Joe organized official contacts and administrative details for Art's recovery with the Powell County Sheriff and Coroner, which was satisfactorily completed that afternoon.

Joe has been an outstanding stalwart throughout the 20 years of this highly successful program and it is with great pleasure that he has been selected as the recipient of this special Volunteer of the Year award and we anticipate many more years with Joe as we move into our 3rd decade of the program. Congratulations Joe.

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Base Abbreviations

Anchorage.....	ANC
Boise.....	NIFC/BOI
Cave Junction.....	CJ
Fairbanks.....	FBX
Grangeville.....	GAC
Idaho City.....	IDC
LaGrande.....	LGD
McCall.....	MYC
Missoula.....	MSO
Redding.....	RDD
Redmond.....	RAC
West Yellowstone...	WYS
Winthrop.....	NCSB

Program Summary for 2018 Fred Cooper (NCSB 62)

TRAMPS celebrated its 20th year of operation this year. When it began in 1999, we had two projects. This year, we had 17 projects in 7 different states with volunteers contributing over 4,500 volunteer hours of work. This equates to well over two-person years of contributed labor. Three planned projects were cancelled for various reasons and it is hoped they will be on our 2019 project list. Our motto is “We Work for Food.” When the program started, agencies contributed funding to pay for food expenses and a little extra for tool and camp supplies. Agencies are now finding it difficult to pay these expenses as their budgets decrease and funds are reallocated. As a result, increased funding sources for our projects are through grants, donations, and foundations. Over a half dozen different funding sources were tapped this year.

You Squad Leaders are the backbone for the TRAMPS operation. If it weren't for you, the program would not exist. The relationships you have built and maintain with agencies is the source of our projects. The excellent work you do, and your year-to-year planning keeps the program enjoyable and operational. Thanks!

If you haven't heard, Steve Carlson is stepping down, due to health reasons, as our Annual Report Editor. Mike Pepion (MSO 82) with assistance from Kim Maynard (MSO 82) have stepped up to the plate and agreed to take over, starting with this year's publication. Steve also sent out periodic chain email messages to our network of TRAMPS volunteers. Gene Hamner, our Registrar has agreed to take on this responsibility. See you on the Trail in 2019!

Tax Exemption Status of NSA Fred Cooper (NCSB 62)

Keep in mind that the National Smokejumper Association is a non-profit charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Consequently, any non-reimbursed expenses incurred by NSA Trail Crew Members may be deductible on your Federal Income Tax return. Because this varies by individual circumstances, you are encouraged to consult your tax preparer or accountant for more information. Our official registered organization name with the IRS is National Smokejumper Association and the assigned Identification Number is 81-0479209.

Editor's Note

Mike Pepion (MSO 82) and Kim Maynard (MSO 82)

This year's TRAMPS Annual report finds itself with a new set of volunteer editors. While we put together this publication, understandably in the shadow of Steve Carlson's legacy of expertise, we certainly enjoyed the challenge. Helping Steve with last year's publication provided good insight as to the process. I am thankful for the “in a pinch” assistance of rookie bro, Kim Maynard, whose expertise to help co-edit this report is much appreciated. We hope our readers will enjoy the publication as much as we have, that is much more than a read out of what was accomplished on the multitude of projects. At the heart of these reports are the values that TRAMPS embodies: comradeship, education, pride in work well done, and loyalty. We have shaped these TRAMPS experiences with overall minor amounts of editing to preserve the essence of that match between good smokejumper storytelling and a form fit report.

Pine Valley Ranger Station
Dixie National Forest
Gary Johnson (RDD 69)



Hwy 18 on the road into Pine Valley with (L-R): Gary Johnson, Morgan Boggs, Chuck Orona, Jim Rush, Digger Daniels

The National Smokejumper Association returned to the Pine Valley Ranger District of the Dixie National Forest (NF) in Southern Utah for 2018. The NSA crew under the leadership of Digger Daniels (MSO 61) included: Jim Rush (MYL 65), Tom Wilks (GAC 87), Chuck Orona (Associate), Morgan Boggs (Associate) and Gary Johnson (RDD 69). The crew reported to the barracks location in the little town of Pine Valley on May 6, 2018 with work starting on May 7, 2018.

The majority of the crew's time consisted of the repair, refurbishment, and repainting of the Forest Service boundary, campground, and directional signs around the Pine Valley Ranger District. Some days the crew would be split up to be able to cover more ground and complete more work. We would go to the sign's location, remove it from the post(s) or whatever the sign was mounted on, and return with the sign to a work center located in Enterprise, Utah (about a 30 minute drive from Pine Valley). At the work center, the signs would be sanded, scraped of old, cracked paint, repaired if needed, and repainted. After allowing a day or two for the signs to dry, we would return them to their proper location on the Ranger District. Again we split the crew up to be able to cover more ground efficiently.

We were able to successfully refurbish several large USFS boundary signs, several smaller boundary signs, guard station/campground signs, and smaller directional signs. Most of the signs were two sided, which doubled the work. We pretty much worked independently except for Wednesday when we pitched in with many of the district people in sprucing up an historic ranger station located in the town of Pine Valley. We raked up pine needles, mowed the lawn, and prepared it for the summer season. We also spent several hours tensioning the wire surrounding the bunk house where we stayed and cooked.

We worked with the same ranger district folks as previous years. They include Will Gilbert, our Field Coordinator for the week, and the Acting District Ranger Jessie Warner.



At the work center (L-R): Morgan Boggs, Tom Wilks, Jim Rush

As at all these volunteer projects, there was much discussion and fellowship around the campfire in the evening. The crew presented the “Order of the Purple Glove” to Morgan for his outstanding work assisting Chuck in preparing all our meals and for pitching in during the day on everything that was accomplished. Morgan, Chuck, and the Acting District Ranger enjoyed a guided tour of some interesting locations on the district, compliments of Will Gilbert.

It sounds like the Dixie NF and NSA are planning on some more work in 2019. We look forward to heading to the Dixie again next year.



At the work center with Tom Wilks and Chuck Orona

Lewis & Clark Trail
Bitterroot National Forest
Fred Cooper (NCSB 62)

This trail, "in the footsteps of Lewis & Clark," was built by a TRAMPS crew in 2016. Under an agreement with the Forest Service, TRAMPS has agreed to clear the trail of blow-down that occurs in the future. Jeff Kinderman (MSO 75) and Mike Pepion (MSO 82) made several trips with their chainsaws clearing down trees this summer.

The trail is 3 miles long on the Montana side of Lost Trail Pass where the Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition travelled on September 4, 1805. The trail was located after extensive research over the last 20 years by several historians and engineers using hand-drawn maps and notes from members of the Corps. Since the trail was reconstructed in 2016, informational, directional, and trailhead signs have been installed. Also, several "witness trees" have been identified that were alive when the Corps of Discovery passed them in 1805. If you haven't hiked the trail, it is a great feeling to do so and reminiscent of what it must have been like going down this ridge over 200 years ago with 30 horses and over 20 people, including a woman with her baby.



(L-R): Jeff Kinderman (MSO 75), Mike Pepion (MSO 82)

Bowery Guard Station #1
Sawtooth National Recreation Area
Robin Embry (GAC 85) and Gary Cardoza (MSO 74)



The Crew: Back Row (L-R): Gary Cardoza (MSO 74), Daniel Pfischer (FS Rec Tech). Front Row (L-R): Tom Wilks (GAC 87), Digger Daniels (MSO 61), Robin Embry (GAC 85), Gary Stitzinger (MSO 65), Shelley Dumas (NSA Volunteer of the Year 2015)

After 30 years in the door, our fearless leader Tom Kovalicky, decided to go fishing instead of fencing. That was his story anyway. Some rumors say he was suffering complications from certain body parts getting slammed in a screen door. Regardless, we were left wandering in the wilderness until Gary Cardoza stepped up to be Squad Leader. He had some big shoes to fill but luckily had a new pair from the Guatemala shoe factory, which upped his game. Noticeably missing from our crew this year were also Neil Rylander and Steve Carlson.

Our crew was much smaller in size than usual, but not in "Can Do Energy!" We took down about two miles of 3 and 4 strand barbed wire fence. If you haven't rolled barbed wire up and down the hills and through sagebrush, you just haven't lived the life of a smokejumper trail crew member. We snagged lots of clothes, arms, hands, and each other. It was a great week.

Historically, the fence at Bowery Guard Station was used to protect riparian areas from cattle grazing, but since the designation of the Boulder White Cloud Wilderness in 2015, it was at odds with the wilderness setting.

Our first day was spent about a mile down the road at a previous crew's de-fencing project. They had either run out of time or run out of steam and weren't able to finish pulling their fence and packing everything down to the road, so we started there.

Our FS rep, Ed “the animal” Cannady, stated that carrying somewhere between 6 to 8 T-posts was probably right for the current terrain, as he hefted his first load of posts and headed down the hill.

It was up to us to figure out the “T-post carrying conversion factor” that needed to be applied to Ed’s standard, as we looked at the humongous pile of posts scattered about on the ground.

The “conversion factor” became a finely tuned individual formula over the following week. There were hundreds of T-posts that needed packing to the road, and dozens of variables that needed to be considered. Am I packing these a quarter mile, or a half mile? Uphill, or downhill? Is there a game trail, or just blasting through sagebrush? Sore shoulder or slightly less sore shoulder? Shoe type, ambient air temperature, time of day, first trip or twentieth trip?

If you shouldered too few, you were wasting a trip, too many and you risked shedding T-posts randomly along the way like antlers lost in the brush. There is an app you can get at Google Play Store to make the conversion, but we didn’t have cell coverage, so had to go old school and figure it out by trial and error.

After lunch we were able to move to our own project and commence work taking down fence. We quickly sorted ourselves out into staple pullers, wire rollers, post pluckers, and mules and found our rhythm.



Ed Cannaday had to leave on day two and was replaced with a young kid (well, relatively) Daniel Pfischer. Daniel had tried to get on a fire crew when he first joined the FS, but his brother was already on the crew so they put him on trails and he never looked back.

It’s a shame he didn’t switch over to fire because after watching him pick up TWELVE T-posts and start stumbling down the hill, crashing into trees and tripping over sagebrush, it was clear he was made of the right stuff to be a jumper. Clearly, he was a devotee to the phrase “work harder, not smarter!” We instantly dubbed him “the beast” and were grateful to

have such an amiable, hardworking mule on our squad.

Besides pulling our fence, we also gathered all the old rusty barbed wire rolls, abandoned stakes, and fencing material that had been accumulating along the fence line randomly over the years. At the end of day three, we found ourselves finishing up our main task and looking at what to do next

Before Ed had left, he had pointed out a line of fence stakes going up the hill, then disappearing somewhere up in the trees on the horizon. The wire was off the posts, but the posts remained.

These weren’t your ordinary fence posts, mind you. Gary Stitzinger thought they looked like the steel brackets used to hold together Marsden Mats, which were temporary landing strips built back in WWII in the Aleutians Islands. (He’s an avid birder and has BEEN to the Aleutians, so he would know.)



Obviously, back in the day, somebody got a good deal on military surplus and thought the brackets would make fine fence posts, which was true. The only problem was that getting them out of the ground was nearly impossible. Our post pullers had nothing to grab onto and they were taller and heavier than a regular post and grooved down the middle, which essentially cemented them into the hardpan dirt.

Ed had run into a few of these posts the week before and said it took about an hour to get one out of the ground. The FS wanted them out, but he wasn't sure exactly how it could be done. Upon further exploration, we found there were 39 of these posts that went marching up the hill.

So, at the end of day three, we gathered up at the first post to see just how tough they really were. The result? Post 1, Jumpers 0.

Of course, this got everyone fired up and the evening was spent exploring all kinds of Rube Goldberg ideas for pulling posts. We consulted with "HE WHO KNOWS ALL THINGS" ...Digger. He wasn't present at the original skirmish, and was skeptical about the alleged difficulties of pulling a simple fence post. Digger thought perhaps a Handyman Jack would be just the ticket.



Digger Daniels

This seemed like a fine idea until it came to light that due to an unfortunate "incident" the year previous, involving a "beast", a Handyman Jack, and 37 stitches, they were now considered contraband on the Sawtooth. We went back to the drawing board and scoured the boneyard looking for more ideas and potential prying objects.

As the next morning dawned and the team headed up the hill, strewn amongst the sagebrush were: steel pipes acting as breaker bars, bits of wire, chunks of wood, hacksaws, chains, post pullers, shovels, buckets, hose clamps, rock bars, and anything else we had found that we thought

might be of use in our mission.

At each post was a stick of jumpers scratching in the dirt, wrestling for traction and prying power, pulling and twisting and bending metal, trying to prise them out of the ground.

At the head of the line, in desperation, the beast grabbed hold of a post and started rocking it back and forth while cursing the gods, determined to win over the posts with sheer brute strength. And suddenly, Voila! Success!!!

This led to the perfect strategy, which was to dig out around each post with shovels and then deploy the secret weapon to rock the post until it could be heaved out of the ground. Once we got the system down, the posts were virtually flying out of the ground and we were finished by lunchtime.

The last day and a half we spent repairing the take-down fence, which was used as a stock enclosure and required no special tools except hammers and wire cutters.

We had the usual bet placed on whether it would frost or not at least one evening of our project. This year the suspense was over the first morning, and so we decided

next year to bet on whether we will have one frost-free night!



Our cook, Shelley Dumas, made sure to hit the fence lines with cookies, fruit, and Gatorade every day. We will try to bribe her into another project for 2019.

There is no better place to spend a week in the summer than at the Bowery. Some large projects spread out over several years on the Guard Station and its water system are desperately needed. Hopefully these will

be on the list in the near future. The Bowery is a diamond in the rough, waiting and counting on the USFS, the Sawtooth Society, and the NSA to bring it back to its full glory. We hope to have the whole crew back at it in 2019!



Big Flat Historic Ranger Station

Fishlake National Forest
Gary Johnson (RDD 69)

At over 10,000 feet, Big Flat is a beautiful high mountain park or large meadow. It is surrounded by towering spruce and aspen. The Big Flat Historic Ranger Station sits on the eastside of Big Flat.

The National Smokejumper Association partnered with the Fishlake National Forest, Beaver Ranger District Recreation Department to help with restoration: painting, updating, and improving this historic site.

The NSA crew of Scott Warner (RDD 69), Tom Wilks (GAC 87), and Gary Johnson (RDD 69) gathered at Big Flat on August 5th for the week-long project. The District is planning on renting out the station next summer. On our first morning at Big Flat we saw deer and elk in the grassy meadow.



Big Flat (L-R): Gary Johnson, Scott Warner, Tom Wilks

Our three-person crew completed the following work during the five days: engineered, built, and painted wooden stairs and railing. Tom completed most of the following tasks: repainted the generator building on the site, touched up paint on the barn, and plumbed and brace main entrance vehicle gate. Scott (Mouse) and two district folks completed these tasks: replaced benches around the fire ring and painted existing screen door and a new one to be hung later. Mouse spent an afternoon cutting and piling brush around the station to be burned later. Windows and door frames were scrapped, sanded, and repainted on the station.

Tom brought a cargo chute for shade. But the afternoon winds stopped us from putting it up. Maybe next year.



At the Ranger Station (L-R): Tom Wilks and Scott Warner working on the railing for the porch

of all trades, Jessie McMullin; and District employee Briel Erickson. After breakfast, we had a bull session about our accomplishments, what went right, and what still needs to be completed. Gifts were exchanged between the NSA crew and our USFS partners. The Forest Service gave each crew member a “fire” bandana and a small carbineer and leatherman tool. NSA presented all of the USFS recreation people with a TRAMPS T-Shirt.



Sitting on the completed railing for the porch (L-R): Gary Johnson, Tom Wilks, Scott Warner

Sitting around the campfire in the evening, several interesting and little known facts came to light: Tom and Scott attended the same high school in the Santa Barbara area at slightly different times. They had never met before the Big Flat Project. Several other interesting bits of information came out during these late night chats, but we are sworn to secrecy.

We were treated to a Forest Service prepared breakfast on Thursday morning. The USFS cooks were the District Recreation Officer, McCall Davis; her assistant, Richard McClanahan; Jack

We were able to discuss possible projects for next year (if financing is available). This would include replacing about 2 ½ miles of worm fencing around the meadow and horse pasture. If this project materializes, we would need about 5-6 more NSA volunteers over the next few years.

The rest of Thursday and Friday was spent cleaning up some loose ends and putting tools away. We left Big Flat on Saturday to return to Beaver, Utah (about one hour away). We are looking forward to returning to the Fishlake NF and the Beaver RD in the future.

West Fork of Teton Creek
Helena/Lewis and Clark National Forest
Lon Dale (MSO 69)



Front Row (L-R): Bob McKean, Mike Owen, Lon Dale. Back row (L-R): Fred Axelrod, Dave Dayton, Robin Hamilton, Keith Beartusk, John Boles

On August 8th, after breakfast at The Grill in Choteau, we checked in at the Rocky Mountain Ranger Station to get the key to the cabin, radio, maps, and instructions. Driving west from Choteau, we could see the mountains of the Rocky Mountain Front standing tall and impressive. As we left the flats and started following the creek, the massive granite cliffs, faces, and ledges practically blocked out the sun.

Our project was to clear and repair the trail along the West Fork of Teton Creek from a bridge crossing to the cabin and campground. We couldn't move into the cabin until about 2:00 p.m. because it had been rented the night before. Dave, always the driving force to get the job done, said we shouldn't waste time going to the cabin, so he, Bear, Bob, and Mike started at the lower trailhead to start clearing trail and assessing its condition.



This is the Forest Service cabin where we stayed.
We also redid the gate entrance

Fred, Lon, John, and I drove up to the cabin, leaving the creek bottom and trees and entering a huge old burn and mountain sides covered with ghostly white branchless lodgepole pines. We stopped to cut some poles for Lon's thermal shower and wondered how old the burn was. Based on the condition of the snags and the regrowth, I estimated about 10 years. When we reached the cabin, the occupants were cleaning and packing. We told them not to hurry. We scouted the area and began setting up the wall tents. At 1:00 p.m. the guests left and we started moving into the cabin and I began assembling the kitchen,

pumping water, and planning dinner. It's a beautiful little cabin, one of the nicest we've used, though it could use a little paint on the exterior and it will be many years before there is any shade around it. The creek is about 50 yards away and as we had been warned, it had been thoroughly scoured by massive run off from an unusually heavy snowpack.

The crew arrived about 3:30 p.m., hot and tired from sawing in almost 90 degree heat. They had cut over 100 logs and worked two miles up the trail. John had brought two large folding canopies, which provided the only shade. They settled in, chose bunks and tents, and walked to the creek to wash up and cool down. Someone had built a rock and moss dam to form a nice pool about three feet deep, nice for wading and dipping.

After a cold beer, we lined up for dinner: fettuccine with marinara sauce, garlic bread, huge green and vegetable salad, and cherry pie cobbler for dessert. The temperature dropped quickly after the sun slid behind Mount Wright and we enjoyed a fire until the stars appeared.

Dave woke me at 5:30 a.m. to put coffee on and start breakfast. In the dim light we saw a doe and her fawn and two bucks, one a four-point. After pancakes with Fred's real Minnesota maple syrup, bacon, melon, and coffee, the crews packed lunches and set off. At 9:00 a.m. the temperature was a pleasant 59 degrees. I was still cleaning up when a Forest Service site inspection crew showed up. They told me that it had been the Fall Creek Fire of 2007 that had torched the forest and left millions of ghostly, branchless, by now almost bark-less, lodgepole pine snags everywhere we could see. What a conflagration it must have been. With no trees to obstruct the view, we could see the towering peaks of Mount Wright and Half Dome and the relay station at Bear Top. Between the army of snags grows a bright green cover of brush and small trees between three and nine feet tall, the beginning of the new forest which will fill this valley with shade in another forty years.



Part of the trail had washed out and we had to build rock cairns to mark the trail

The crew started early the next two days because of high heat warnings of over 90 degrees and lack of any shade for breaks. But, in spite of the heat, finished the assigned trail work a day early. Lon, the detail man, had brought some extra equipment that he knew we needed to repair the log fence at the entrance to the compound and when we left it was a much more attractive first impression. We said we would paint the cabin, but no one could round up any paint and brushes for us at short notice. Some of the most avid fishermen hiked back down the canyon to drift a fly at some deep holes in the canyon and some big cutthroats couldn't resist the skill of the anglers.

After the sun slipped behind the mountains, the temperature dropped quickly and the campfire was welcome. After dinner we decided to leave the next day, Saturday, since all the work was done and another day of unmitigated heat didn't appeal. So we told the last stories, drank the last beers, and wondered if we would be young enough to do another project next year.

Priest River Experimental Forest
Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Chuck Haynes (Associate)

Following a two-year hiatus, the smokejumper trail crew returned to Priest River Experimental Forest (PREF) in the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. This is easily one of the nicest locations available. It has a lodge with beds, showers, and a front porch for enjoying the evenings in a beautiful setting while listening to tales of daring-do by elderly gentlemen. It also has a large, fully-equipped kitchen for our cooks to work their magic. This was the seventh time NSA has sent a crew here. Bob Denner (Associate) was the Crew Chief. The crew consisted of Jim Snapp (MSO 65), Karl Maerzluft (FBX 67), Mike Boeck (IDC 69), Mike Jones (Associate), and me. Somehow, Bob conned his wife, Sandy, to cook for us, and she, in turn, convinced her friend Cheryl Knapp to assist her.



Front row: (L-R): cooks, Sandy Denner and Cheryl Knapp. Back row (L-R): Bob Denner, Mike Boeck, Jim Snapp, Mike Jones, Chuck Haynes and Karl Maerzluft.

Each year we have been to PREF, we have engaged in trail work, and that was no different this year. Mike Jones, as our only USFS certified sawyer, got to spend most of his time bucking logs and falling snags over several miles of trails and roads. Each of us got to follow along behind him, tossing logs and limbs off the trail, trimming back overhanging limbs, and repairing damage to the trails. There was a lot of road work as well, since several road sections had been obstructed by downed trees. Jim and Mike got an extra workout on Tuesday, when they had to hike back to the main area. They had left Mike's truck at the top of Canyon Creek trail, and Bob had promised to pick them up at the bottom and drive them back up to pick up Mike's truck. Unfortunately, Bob left his cell phone on the charger in the lodge while he spent the day working in the shop. The good news was that Bob's cell phone had catalogued all the texts and phone messages that they had left during their hike.

The next big task was to strip, prime, and paint the weather instrument shelter. PREF has a series of instruments which have been recording all manner of weather data over the 117 years of PREF's existence. Some of those instruments are housed in a shelter we believe was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. After numerous paint jobs over the years, the station manager decided to have this wooden box, with its countless louvres, sandblasted and repainted. We got the repainting task. What fun!

The first problem was that the sandblasting did not remove all the old paint, so we had to do additional sanding and scraping ourselves (tedious!). Additionally, the sandblasting had done a number on the wood so applying the primer coat was substantially more difficult than it should have been. Mike Boeck, who lives in Sand Point, about 30 miles away, brought his paint gun from home to help with the task. Unfortunately, the primer was so thick it wouldn't go through Mike's sprayer, so we had to do the priming with brushes. Mike was oblivious to the problem, because that was the day he got to have fun with Mike Jones doing trail work. When he got back from his day in the woods and we told him about it, he felt so bad that he went home that night and bought a new paint sprayer! The result was that he got to play with his new sprayer on Friday. He painted the entire weather instrument shelter in less than an hour, then applied a second coat after taking a break to let the first coat dry. It took longer to clean the new sprayer than it took to do the painting. There's something to be said for technology and labor-saving devices.



Mike Boeck spray painting the weather instrument shelter.

Back in 2010, our carpentry crew rebuilt the shop door, a heavy-duty sliding door that required several of us to reinstall. Over the years, we have had to readjust the door. At the time, our original carpentry crew thought that the door should hang level to the ground rather than at the same angle that the building leans. I recall some discussion about doing the job right, but I'm not a carpenter, so I didn't understand it all. Anyway, we had to do some minor repairs and adjustments. Naturally, the wind came up while Mike Boeck was spraying *white* paint on the weather instrument shelter, so we had to repaint the *brown* door as well.

There were numerous tasks that we have done over the years that require being re-done due to the harsh weather conditions in the Panhandle. We applied yet another coat of Thompson WeatherSeal to the amphitheater benches and podium and to the porch, railing, and steps leading into the conference building. We cleaned and cemented back into place a large piece of slate on the steps to the front porch of the lodge. We repaired and replaced brass stair nosings in the office building. We use a polyurethane sealer to recoat the west-side exterior door to the office building (that door takes a beating from the sun during the summer). There was water damage to the ceiling in the entryway to the lodge, so we repaired and repainted that area. And there was an old chicken coop behind the resident's cabin that had seen better days. We tore down the coop, sending the wood off to the slash pile and recycling the chicken wire.



Karl Maerzluft prepping the shelter before painting

Finally, we spent one afternoon clearing sediment from the weir (settling) pond and stilling rack. This pond is used for stream flow data collection and invariably collects rocks, sand, and debris as Benton Creek runs its course. Clearing the sediment is always a fun chore – a bunch of old men splashing around in the water with shovels while one guy mans a fire hose and sprays water to loosen the sediment. We chose the warmest (104°) day of our trip to do that job.

As usual, evenings were the best times. The cooks fed us hearty meals. One night, we had huckleberry pie made with berries that Sandy and Cheryl had freshly picked that day up in a forest meadow. That pie made the whole trip worthwhile. Then we would

adjourn to the lodge and sit around on the front porch telling (or listening to) smokejumper tales.

Long Tom Ridge Project
Salmon/Challis National Forest
Perry Whitaker (MSO 71)

One four mile access road was opened to get to one of the wilderness trails designated for maintenance. Additionally, three trails were opened and maintenance completed for 8.7 miles of wilderness trails. Skunk Camp Trail #163 and Broomtail Trail #164 are within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness (FCRNRW).

Ten volunteers with the National Smokejumper Association donated a week of time consisting of two travel days and five days working trails. Geoff Fast, Wilderness Ranger for the Salmon/Challis National Forest (NF), conceptualized the project and provided guidance to NSA Squad Leader and crew regarding work expectations and safety concerns. Also, Harrison Stone, a Wilderness Ranger, worked two days with the crew.



Front row (L-R): Bill Werhane, Perry Whittaker, Bruce Ford, Jeff Nerison, Back row (L-R): Larry Ukestad, Phil Difani, Joe Kroebar, Rich Appis (Associate), Harry Stone (USFS), Jeff Kinderman

The project entailed the opening of one road and trail maintenance to provide for public use of three National Forest System trails accessing the FCRNRW that were in a deferred maintenance category.

The crew completed the following in five work days: 8.7 miles of trail was opened, 845 logs and saplings were removed from the trail which included a significant number of debris and small trees that were removed by hand from the trail, 82 water bars were cleaned out, and approximately 150 yards of tread was completed. This work was done mostly with crosscut saws, silky saws, pulaskis, and loppers. Considerable brushing within the trail corridor was completed with the use of loppers, pulaskis, and

silky's' to remove shrubs and seedlings. A chainsaw was used on a minor portion of the trail outside the wilderness and on the road accessing the wilderness trail.



Bill Werhane left foreground, (L-R) sawing: Jeff Nerison and Jeff Kinderman. Sawing on right side (L-R): Phil Difani and Perry Whittaker with Joe Kroebar pounding wedges

Planning and upfront coordination are very important. It is absolutely critical to have good communication among all parties to ensure the work completed meets the expectations of the NF. It is also important to stress safety to ensure the safety of crew members. It is very helpful to have a crew that is experienced in the use of hand tools including the felling and bucking of trees/logs with a crosscut saw. The crew performs much better when they are physically fit. A good cook makes the project more

appealing to prospective crew members.

Coordination with Geoff Fast, Wilderness Ranger, was great for this project and several past projects. We have a great working relationship with the Salmon/Challis NF. The pre-planning coordination, together with the pre-work discussion with the NF regarding work expectations and safety concerns, are important to the success of a project. Generally, someone from the NF works directly with the NSA crew. This assures a successful project since the NSA feels like they accomplished a lot of good work and the NF is satisfied with the work completed.



The project was identified by the NF in November of 2017. It was one of many advertised by the NSA in February of 2018 that NSA members could sign up for during the 2018 field season once the NSA Squad Leader and the NF agree on a week for the work to occur. It is important that the NF representative and NSA Squad Leader agree on the number of workers to recruit and the tools necessary to accomplish the work. The workers and a cook are recruited for the project. Immediately prior to the project, logistics necessary include identifying the camp supplies

needed along with the tools and who will transport them to the work site. Since the crew

is coming from various geographical locations, they must be informed of times to meet, location of campsite, and when to arrive at camp. Upon completion of the project, final reports are prepared for the NSA, NF, and for this project, another report for the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance.



Trails into the FCRNRW were opened and maintained to allow access by pack animals and hikers that were previously closed. These trails were considered deferred maintenance. The efforts by the NSA removed portions of these trails from the deferred maintenance category. Memorable quotes from participants: “We work for food.” “The miles behind us are a result of putting one foot in front of the other.”



Lolo Pass Historical Cabin
Clearwater/Nez Perce National Forest
Bob Whaley (MSO 56)

The Lolo Pass Cabin, elevation 5322 feet, was this year's Selway Bitterroot-Frank Church (SBFC) Foundation's NSA project. It introduced the crew to a new arrow in the quiver of jobs that are somewhat out of the ordinary in the playbook of typical NSA projects in which to excel. This was the 20th year of the NSA Trail Crew program and its history of volunteering for the USFS and other US agencies.

This year's players were Dick Hulla (MSO 75), Jim Lee (MSO 71), Robert Cushing (MSO 59), Chuck Fricke (MSO 61), Dennis Pearson (MSO 62), and yours truly... (MSO 56).



(L-R): Jim Lee, Dennis Pearson, Chuck Fricke, Bob Whaley, Dick Hulla, Robert Cushing

The historic cabin, settled just behind the Lolo Pass Visitors' Center, was at one time the actual Visitors' Center and was relocated to its current site some years ago and in need of extensive interior and exterior work. This included staining the entire two-story exterior, painting the upstairs bedrooms, cleaning the entire cabin, and dobbing the exterior logs. The term dobbing is the proper terminology that we used to call chinking. That process entailed removing the existing steel wool that was inlaid between the logs and then removing the white dobbing (chinking) that came out in heavy strips. The process next involved stuffing oakum, which is a heavily treated three strand-rope twisted together and stuffed between the log cracks where the steel wool

had been and then applying the dobbing material, which then adheres to it to complete the process. The dobbing material is a thick mortar, almost cement like, that we mixed in wheel barrels and applied with spatula type tools scooped from mortar boards into the logs.

It was a delicate process that takes some time to perfect, and few of us, I believe, can claim expert status. Our instructor was Cathy Bickenhauser, Regional Historic Preservation Officer who provided instruction on the process and was hard to emulate but even with a fairly slow learning curve most of it turned out quite well, thanks to her oversight.

The process was delayed somewhat due to not getting the scaffolding to the site until Thursday, which was needed to do the second story in the rear. The front was completed with a long ladder so we finished everything except the east and west sides of the structure. As previously noted, the upstairs was painted with two coats of white paint which improved significantly the livability of those rooms.

There was plenty of work to do to keep the crew busy. It rained the first two days, which forced us to work inside and delayed more outside efforts. Larry Cooper, our dedicated chef and packer through the years, was unable to join us due to a work commitment he had, but Jim Lee stepped up and provided an excellent evening meal on Monday night. And on Tuesday, Dick Hulla joined us after completing his Smith River float trip and the two of them did a super job of ensuring no one suffered from malnutrition on this outing. Yours truly did the shopping and neglected to include a few critical items for breakfasts and lunches i.e. ketchup and mayo. But in true fashion, Bob Cushing had his traveling convenience store in his car and provided the missing items that I forgot. Fred Cooper also joined us and brought two very nice watermelons that were shared with the FS ladies and were much appreciated.

Also, many of the carpentry jobs that needed attention would not have been done without Chuck Frickie's Home Depot pick up that had every tool imaginable--a real boon to the project that permitted us to do many little extras for the old cabin. An example of such was the individual elevation letters and numbers on the second story which had to be removed one at a time. Chuck, Jim, Dennis, and Bob found good plank material, refinished the letters and numbers, and made a very attractive sign all securely mounted, which now is back in place and says LOLO PASS...5322 Feet. In addition to Jim Lee's cooking, it would not be a complete project without his bottle of Famous Grouse as he continues the tradition started by our departed friend Jim "Doc" Phillips, whom we all miss greatly.

The cabin provided amenities rarely experienced on any of our previous projects, including hot and cold running water in kitchen and bathroom/shower, table for six in kitchen adjacent to nice living room area, two refrigerators, gas stove, microwave, and three bedrooms. I told the guys to not get too comfortable with these trappings since they may never see them again on any of my good deals!

Though Dick, Jim, Bob, and Chuck had to depart late Friday afternoon, Dennis and I remained and finished dobbing the rear of the cabin and stayed Friday night. On Saturday we cleaned up the whole area putting everything we used in the other out buildings, did touch up on the logs, cleaned the paint brushes, swept out the cabin, cleaned the kitchen and bathroom, and departed the area mid afternoon. Dennis was able to change his flight home to Sunday from Tuesday--his financial hit on the non-refundable ticket was adjusted somewhat due to an outstanding travel agent that he has. After a night at the Whaley Motel, he was winging his way home Sunday afternoon.



The only bright spot on the Shearer Selway Pack bridge Project was that Dick Hulla fired up his Citabra bird on 29 May and we flew down to Shearer to scope out the project. That evening, our USFS liaison, Brad Bence, called me to inform me that the Shearer project for us was cancelled due to mandatory USFS training that week we were to go in. So we were offered the Lolo Pass Cabin project which I accepted, though disappointedly so. We realize the importance of accepting whatever project the USFS, in concert with the SBFC Foundation, wants done and is vital to the continuing fine relationship we enjoy with those two excellent entities.

It can't be overemphasized the importance of the leadership that is provided by Sally Ferguson, Director of the SBFC Foundation and her capable assistant, Courtney Wall, in the completion and coordination of these annual projects. Also, the USFS personnel at the Lolo Pass Visitors' Center were most helpful in offering continued assistance with little details that seemed to pop up frequently. Their supervisor, Buffie Cerutti, was also most helpful in the planning and ongoing support during our week there. The Lolo Pass USFS ladies just mentioned are Hannah Conterll, Mary Jane Jackson, Colleen Matheson, and Regina Madplume. In their interest in the project, some came down one day and got their hands very dirty helping with the dobbing process and they did a good job. I want to express my gratitude to my crew who, though disappointed in not getting the Shearer project, showed up and performed enthusiastically and most professionally. Good job, guys.

North Fork Trailhead Project
Lolo National Forest
Gary Lawley (MSO 57)

On July 17, 2018, a diverse group of individuals met at the North Fork Trailhead near Seeley Lake, Montana, to perform some long overdue maintenance on the heavily used horse corrals and nearby campgrounds. Most members of this crew were retired smokejumpers who gather annually somewhere in the west (mostly) to work for the Forest Service and revisit old times.

We thought it would be interesting to include a thumbnail bio-sketch of each crew member so the reader can get an idea of how diverse these people's backgrounds were, with the only common tie they have with each other is they were at one time smokejumpers or friends of jumpers.



(L-R): John Salisbury (Associate), Neil Marjerrison (Associate), Gene Hamner (MSO 67), Jan McLaren (MSO 71), Dick Hulla (MSO 75), Katie Knotek (FS Project Rep), Dan Hensley (MSO 57), Edmund Ward (MSO 80), Gary Lawley (MSO 57), Barry Hicks (MSO 64)

Here is the crew:

Barry Hicks (MSO 64): Barry was the Squad Leader on this project. Barry was with the Forest Service for 41 years as a District Ranger and held various other jobs. Barry recently helped investigate the deaths of the 19 firefighters in Arizona and worked on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. He lives in Bonner, Montana.

Dick Hulla (MSO 75): Dick was in charge of cross cut saws during his career in the Forest Service. He has spent many winters on the ski patrol at Sun Valley, Idaho.

Dick is a tireless worker and brings many of his own tools to the trails projects. He lives in Missoula, Montana.

Dan Hensley (MSO 57): Dan recently retired after 54 years as a member of the Los Angeles Search and Rescue Team and 30 years as a high school PE teacher. This was his 11th year to work on a trails crew. Dan brings a present to his fellow crew members each year. This year he brought everyone a nice light jacket. Dan also brought a grinder and a screwdriver to this year's project. Dan lives just outside of Los Angeles, California.

Gary Lawley (MSO 57): Gary still works as a consulting scientist and planner on major spills around the world. He has worked in Peru, Kuala Lumpur, and Egypt during the past three years. He managed major environmental projects after coaching high school basketball. He doesn't bring any tools to projects. Gary lives in Anchorage, Alaska.



Big Larch on the way down. (L-R) Eddy Ward, Dick Hulla

Neil Marjerrison (Associate): Neil was our cook on the last two North Fork Projects. He sleeps while on projects in a horse trailer (with the horse). He is a great cook! He has the strongest grip of anyone I know. The bio he sent me said simply "Neil is 5 ft tall". Neil lives just outside of Missoula, Montana.

Jan McLaren (MSO 71): Jan is a retired marine and is simply the hardest worker on any project he has been on. He is always smiling and helping someone and is tremendously strong for his size. Jan typically brings a couple of 4 wheelers on trail projects for the use of any crew member after work. Jan's career with the Forest Service includes serving as Director of Appropriations. Jan lives near Missoula, Montana.

Gene Hamner (MSO 67): Gene spent six years in the air force, and was an Air America pilot. He is the author of story about Air America. He then spent 35 years as a crop duster. Gene is quiet, serious and tremendously strong. He is

a great asset to any crew. Gene lives in Lodi, California.

John Salsbury (Associate): John has always enjoyed the outdoors and feels like working on a trail crews each summer with retired smokejumpers is an enjoyable and worthwhile task. Since John spent his career doing microsurgery, we gave him the job of retouching the large sign from the North Fork Campground. He did a great job. John lives up on the side of the mountain in Missoula, Montana.

Eddy Ward (MSO 80): Eddy was the youngest member of our trails crew so he had to work the hardest and bring the most tools. Eddy served as manager of the smokejumper base in Missoula during his Forest Service career. Since retiring, he likes to work with his hands doing upkeep on various houses in Missoula or going to Alaska to fix his sister's bathroom. Eddy is usually the one who figures out how to do a

particular task and he has the right tool for the job. After work each day, Eddy likes to climb the nearest steep mountain for relaxation. Eddy lives in Missoula, Montana.

What a diverse crew! Guys of all ages from all over the west with a variety of careers and life experiences. Lots of older guys. Could they get the work done? Maybe! Each summer volunteers from the National Smokejumper Association work on projects in eight states helping restore cabins, trails, corrals, and lookouts. These volunteers are called TRAMPS (Trail Restoration and Maintenance Program Specialists) whose motto is "We work for food."



Presenting Jan McLaren with trail project T-Shirt.
(L-R) John Salisbury, Barry Hicks, Jan McLaren,
Dick Hulla

The North Fork Project was in the Lolo National Forest near Seeley Lake, Montana. This area has special significance to many smokejumpers: there was a temporary jump base near there back in the early days of smokejumping. Many of the members of this TRAMPS crew worked there on "project" while jumping out of Missoula during their careers. One crew member recalls being chased by a momma grizzly near the Condon Ranger Station back in 1958.

The North Fork Trailhead is one of the main gateways for hikers and horse riders into the 1.5 million acres of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. The work

on the North Fork Project consisted of completely rebuilding one of the large horse corrals, replacing the hitching posts in the horse campground, felling some of the huge tamarack trees in the camp area, and repainting the interpretive signs at the entrance to the campground. This is one of the few campgrounds and trail heads set up and maintained primarily for horsemen in the United States.

The work began by removing the old 2 x 8 railings from the horse corral. Now this is fun work for a TRAMPS crew, and by noon of the first day we had those rails down. Now came a problem: there were five large ring nails left in each post at four heights after we had knocked the rails down. Pulling one of those nails took about five minutes of the hardest work imaginable.

Then Dan had an idea: why not use a grinder and cut the nails off. Dan had gotten locked in from leaving a trails project site a few years ago, and had been rescued by a fellow jumper with a battery-operated grinder. Well, Dan had gone and gotten himself one of those grinders. He fetched the tool, and in no time at all we had those tough old ring nails laying on the ground.

One of the huge posts was rotten so we had to replace it. This took two people half a day (a tough job). One jumper remembers spending one full day digging the post hole for a telephone pole; it was in rocky ground and they used an old auger type post hole digger. The hardest work there is! Thank goodness there was cold beer to drink after work each day that had been stashed in the local stream.

Now came the job of replacing the railings. We soon settled into a rhythm and by the end of the second day we had those rails up and screwed in tight. We also replaced all the feeding trough rails and the big hitching post along the front of the corral. This work required going into the nearby forest and cutting down trees of just the right size, hauling them to the work area, peeling the bark, and replacing all the damaged railing. While working, we witnessed the new way to shoe horses and mules: they strap the animal to a trailer mounted platform, lift it hydraulically, lay it on its side and two people reshoe the strapped down feet in just a few minutes. Efficient, but some horsemen do not like this method.

The next task was to replace the old-style pole hitching rails in the horse campground. We had to pull the 12 in. nails from the old rails and metal straps and go into the nearby woods and find and cut a suitable lodgepole pine to replace the hitch pole. This tree was dragged to the work area and peeled and re-nailed to the top of the hitching posts. This work took only a half a day.

The next task was to fell a half dozen giant larch in the campground. It was a shame to all of us to have to cut those 40" diameter, 150 ft trees that were already 200 years old when Captain Lewis and his crew passed through this valley of the Blackfoot on their way back to Great Falls back in 1806. These giants were felled because they all had dead tops, characteristic to Larch, and these are lethal hazards in a campground. Felling these trees is a delicate operation. Thankfully, we had two of the best sawyers outside the timber industry in Dick Hulla and Eddy Ward. They dropped one of these monsters between a bathroom and a hitching post with inches to spare on each side. The only remaining task was to re-touch and varnish the interpretative sign which told the history of the campground. We removed the sign and hauled it back to camp and set Dr. Salisbury to work on re-touching the sign. It took him most of a day to do this tedious work.

We completed the work in about four days, a day ahead of schedule. So several of the younger folks went up the trail doing some needed trail maintenance which was an add-on to the project. People, e.g. Forest Service personnel, are always amazed that such a diverse group of "old folks" get so much work done so fast. Here is how it works. Everyone in the crew is a true volunteer and is there because they want to be there and they are there to work! There is very little structure on a TRAMPS Project. Each crew member is a self-starter, motivated to figure out how to help the best way they can.

Crew members determine without hesitation who can best do what activity. The crew members know (and brought) what tools are needed and know how to use them. We all enjoy working outside in the beautiful National Forests. We don't talk much about safety but each of the crew members understands basic safety and watches out for themselves and each other all the time.

To watch us work, you would think we had spent days in training because we work so smoothly together; truth is, we were all trained in working hard and being responsible as smokejumpers during our successful careers. This results in a lot of work getting done in a short while.

After the project, some of us went back to Missoula to call old friends who were not on this project and have a toast to our recently departed buddies. It's not lost on us that we are a pretty old group and we don't have many more years to enjoy a few weeks in the woods together each summer. Thank goodness there is going to be a reunion next summer in Boise. One more time to see everyone again! It will be a scheduling problem for some of us, figuring how to make the reunion and then doing a couple of projects a few weeks later, but we will manage. See you next year!

Rocky Mountain National Park Bob Doran (Associate)

In June 2018 the Rocky Mountain Project group met in Rocky Mountain National Park near Estes Park, Colorado. This was our sixth year at Rocky Mountain National Park. Our campsite was in the same Moraine Park group camping area. The Park Staff assisted us by loaning us a cooking table that was sized well for our needs and solved our logistics problem of providing the mutually shared stove. Chuck Orona, our great chef from Johnson's Corner, was happy.

The scope of our project was to build a log bridge over a section of the Bierstadt Lake trail that is typically flooded and muddy during the spring and rainy seasons. Colorado has recently been very dry with very little rain and snow so we were high and dry during the project. However, we all came equipped with mud boots. We were happy with the dry conditions. For the Video hit control and click on this link. https://youtu.be/du_lkuqeVlo



The Crew: Back Row, (L-R): Doug Wamsley (MSO 65), Luke Lemke (MSO 69), Chuck Orona Chef, Denis Symes (MYC 63), Ron Siple (MYC 53), Ryan Siple ASSOC, Bob Doran ASSOC. Front Row (L-R): Bob Smee (MSO 68), Warren Pierce (CJ 64), Ron Baylor (MSO 58), Jim Klever (Associate)

Bob Smee and Ron Baylor joined the Rocky Mountain National Park Project this year and provided welcome assistance. We were led and assisted by Marieke Flynn and Ben Robinson, both National Park employees working with and guiding volunteer projects.

We missed Steve Vittum as he was in therapy for an injured rotator cuff. Hopefully he will be recovered and back with us next year.

Next year's project will be held in September. This is because the group camping area will be closed in early June for maintenance. Additionally, we are somewhat limited by snow in June as it is not usually melted above 9,500 feet, depending on the snow year. It appears there is universal concurrence by the team for the change of month.

The project went well, there were plenty of log locking boulders available for securing the log bridges. Logs for the bridge had been provided by the Park Service.

It was a great project and if we get traditional precipitation in the future, hikers will enjoy having dry and not muddy feet.



Doug Wamsley, Chuck Orona



(Left) Ryan Siple and Ben Robinson (Park Service) deliver a load of rocks and position rocks to lock bridge supports



The logs were top surfaced for walking, notched for assembly, timber locked, and rock-locked in placed

Before



After



Tent Lake Bridge Project
Beaverhead/Deerlodge National Forest
Richard Trinity (MSO 66)

NSA Members: Jack Atkins (MSO 68), Bill Kolar (MSO 59), Rod McIver (MSO 64), Don Ranstrom (MSO 66), Richard Trinity (MSO 66), and Karin Connelly (Cook).
District employees: Matt Walters (RO) and Patrick Thomas (ARO).



(L-R): Bill Kolar, Rod McIver, Don Ranstrom, Richard Trinity

The project was to build a 25-30 foot bridge across Tent Creek coming out of Tent Lake. The bridge was to be constructed on site from available timber. Camp was to be at Tent Lake where a previous NSA project had camped ten years earlier. The project was 1.5 miles from the trailhead and a packer was to be used for a pack-in event. However, after three different packers were solicited, none could do the job. The first ended up with sick animals and declined. The second had old animals which could not make the multiple 6 (one-way) mile trips from the main road (and he said his trailer could not negotiate the bad road to the trail head). The third packer actually rode with us the day before to the trailhead, but declined and said the road was too bad for his 40 ft. trailer to negotiate. However, upon returning to his home in rural Dillon, we discovered his homemade portable toilet lying unused and he offered to let us use it—and we did. Still had to dig a hole, but the toilet unit just parked over the hole and worked great (including the automatic flush)! So instead, we dry camped just off the road near the trailhead and walked to the project each day. Patrick brought us a large tank of water on a trailer for the duration.

We met in Dillon for breakfast Saturday morning (day #1), then went to the Dillon Ranger Station to gear up, sign papers, and drove to the campsite (slowly, bad road). By mid afternoon, camp was set up so we tooled up and walked in to Tent Lake and surveyed the project site. Estimated bridge length was measured and several

nearby trees were identified as candidates. Plan was to cut and split one (with chainsaw), alternate ends, and anchor to supporting sills with rebar.

Sunday a 14" diameter lodgepole pine was felled about 100 yards from the bridgehead and positioned horizontally at a two foot height. About mid-morning a four-person, well-trained AmeriCorps crew arrived unannounced and brushed the bridgeheads, sharpened some tools (they had their own flat bastard files!), and ultimately did most of the peeling of the two split log stringers. Using the usual four man team, the tree was split vertically. A non-chalk line was made with taught string and the saw blade of a Victorinox multitool, scraping down to visible bare wood as a guide for cutting.



Sawyer Rod stood on the tree in a semi-straddling manner wearing Vibram sole boots. Plumb man Don sat at the distal end of the tree carefully holding a flat bastard file vertically by the tang to keep the saw blade vertically oriented. Support man Bill stood on one side of the tree pressing Rod's boot into the log and gripping his pants so as not to let him slip or topple off. Support man Richard stood on the other side doing the same as well as keeping the cut line clean and visible brushing ahead of the saw

blade with a small tree branch. Additionally, he was tasked to watch Don for any indication of saw blade adjustment needed and then tapping on Rod's shoulder to look up at Don from sawing (too noisy to just yell out adjustments) and adjust the vertical saw cut the direction that Don was pointing to with his free other hand.

The final bridge pieces (after peeling) were then carried by two teams of two-man log carriers to the creek and cantilevered across to the opposite bridgehead. After some adjusting, the two-piece bridge was fairly stable and held all 8 workers without fail.



At day's end the bridge was not finished, but functional so a "Cross at your own risk" warning sign was left for any traffic between overnight work hours. The next day, sills were cut, peeled, and contoured to accommodate each end of the two log stringers. These were then hand drilled and anchored to the sills with 3ft rebar. Two fishermen and their dog were the first customers who smiled as they crossed over. Before the bridge construction, crossing was done hopping from one rock to another. But after that, crossing was easy!

Each bridge end abutment needed some trail construction work which was handily carried out by AmeriCorps members while the sills were being placed. Final bridge length was 23 feet and 28" wide. With bridge construction complete, AmeriCorps

packed up and left while NSA personnel crossed over and did some trail work on the way to Twin Lakes, 1.5 miles above the bridge. Patrick had left us the day before for nearby wildfire duty. We then reversed course on the trail and returned to make a final bridge crossing on the way back to camp.



AmeriCorps was kind enough to pack out some tools and we invited them to supper. So, Monday night was “Friday night” since the project was done early, but steaks remained. They did not remain long and Karin-the-cook created a fine last supper—as was the case with all her meals! We broke camp the next morning and arrived at the Ranger Station to unload and disperse to home. Although the project was scheduled for five days, it was nonetheless completed in two workdays. But what can you do? The Dillon Ranger District was great to work for and we look forward to more projects.



San Pedro Parks Wilderness Trails Project
Santa Fe National Forest
Mike Overby (MSO 67)

New Mexico TRAMPS had our second trail project in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness of New Mexico in August 2018. We had been asked again by the Santa Fe Chapter of Back Country Horsemen to return (after they saw the great work done in 2017).

Team members for the project included Mike Overby (MSO 67), Jon Klingel (CJ 65), Doug Walmsy (MSO 65), Allison Stout (MYC 80), Java Bradley (MSO 74) and Associates Alan Wonders (Dallas), and Mark Rivera (Angel Fire, NM).



Front row (L-R): Mark Rivera (T), Debbie Spickerman (BCH). Back row (L-R): Steve Percival (BCH), Mike Overby (T), Alan Wonders (T), Nick Martinez (BCH), Allison Stout (T), Jon Klingel (T), Margaret Hermann (BCH), Joan Lattiner (BCH), Doug Walmsley (T), Java Bradley (T)

After a full 5 days of trail work the team cleared 6.25 miles and cut 307 trees. The result was a nice loop from and to Vega Rodonda where camp was located.

On the last day of the project we were visited by members of Back Country Horsemen (BCH) – including the owner/editor of Horse Around New Mexico magazine, Cecilia Kayano. As the article was quite impressive, I am including the text of article here.

“Clear Trails for All” – November/December Issue of Horse Around New Mexico:

“Retired smokejumpers return to the wilderness they love, not to contain wildland fires this time around, but to keep trails clear for riders, ranchers and hikers.

Seven men were hunkered down in the middle of the San Pedro Parks Wilderness, some assuming the anti-lightning position of knees to chest, arms crossed over heart. There had been a sudden boom of thunder, followed by rain, hail, wind, and lightning. The men, members of an elite trail clearing group, were working on a six-mile loop trail when they were hit by this unexpected storm.

When you hear how these men, ages 61-78, volunteer two weeks each year to clear trails for horseback riders, ranchers and hikers, you will never look at a log cut from the trail in the same way.

Jumping into fires...The men are members of the National Smokejumpers Association Trails Restoration & Maintenance Project Specialists (TRAMPS). All but one worked for years as smokejumpers, parachuting into areas in and around wildland fires to build containment fire lines. TRAMPS was started in 1999 by a retired smokejumper as a way for fellow retirees to have a reason to return to the backcountry areas that they love, keep those areas open by building and maintaining trails and most of all, maintain relationships with other retired jumpers.

Need for horses...Each year TRAMPS teams in eight states take on about two projects each. The project for this particular team was to clear trails in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness of the Santa Fe National Forest. Some TRAMPS projects are near drive-in campgrounds, offering the luxury of overnighting in trailers or campers, and walking short distances to the project site. But this team was going to clear trail five miles from the nearest drive-in campground. They coordinated with the Forest Service and the Santa Fe Chapter of Back Country Horsemen to pack in their gear: a 40' X 40' heavy vinyl tarp, tables, chairs, cook stoves, coolers, food, and professional sawyer crosscut saws, pulaskis, and peavies. Having the horse power was critical. 'We couldn't pack all this gear up here,' said TRAMPS member Jon Klingel. 'We couldn't do this without the help of Back Country Horsemen.'

The men carried their personal gear from the trailhead five miles uphill to a campsite on the edge of the Vega Redonda. They were followed by seven BCH members and pack animals including horses, mules, and one burro. At the end of the day, there was enough gear and food at the site for six days in the wilderness.

Trail clearing machines...Although BCH members are good at clearing trail, the TRAMPS teams are experts. 'They are true professionals,' said Joan Lattner, President of the Santa Fe Chapter of Back Country Horsemen. 'When they go out, they are like a team of finely-tuned log-cutting machines. They have the knowledge and the tools.' Joan witnessed the team clearing part of the six-mile loop out of the Vega Redonda. There was very little need for words as the men walked from log blockage to blockage. Each one had a responsibility: to man a specific saw, to lubricate blades, to move the cut logs, to saw branches. When the thunderstorm came in, they set down all metal tools, took cover and protected themselves against lightning strikes. It took them five days to clear the loop which included a half-mile section of crisscrossed blow down. For years it had been impossible for horseback riders to pass. Even hikers had a difficult time walking around and climbing over the mess of downed trees.

Their reasons for doing it... 'That's why we all clear trails, for hikers, horseback riders and ranchers,' said Joan. 'Imagine if there was a forest fire. How would the firefighters get in here if the trails were blocked?' Both Joan and the TRAMPS members know that the Forest Service does not have funds to

clear many of the trails in national forests and wildernesses, and that by volunteering to do it, they are keeping access open to the backcountry for all.

A precious gift of a clear trail... On their final morning, TRAMPS had cleared the six-mile loop, making passable some of the messiest sections of trail in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness. They packed up their gear so when six BCH members and their horses, mules, and burro arrived, they were ready to tie the gear on the stock and head back down to the Resumidero Campground. Their timing was perfect: Four nights later, 54 BCH members from chapters around the state gathered at Resumidero for their yearly celebration. Many rode the loop that the smokejumpers had cleared, plus other main trails that had been recently cleared by BCH members. There were no worries, no high logs to step over, no tangles of blowdown to try to bypass. There were only sawed logs, whitish yellow from their recent cuts, and small damp piles of sawdust still there.

Before he left for his home in Farmington, TRAMPS member Watson (Java) Brady wished the BCH members a good time. 'You guys are going to be amazed by what we did. You guys will ride a dam good trail.'



Teamwork was essential dealing with lots of blowdown

THE TRAMPS TEAM...

Watson (Java) Bradley lives in Farmington, NM and is 66. He was a smokejumper in Montana. 'When I clear, I think about horseback riders and hikers. This clearing needs to be done. The first day, there was a messed up area, and we only cleared a couple hundred yards. I would like to see more jumpers get active. It's good camaraderie.'

Jon Klingel is 74 and lives in Santa Fe. He was a smokejumper in Alaska and Oregon. 'I like working with people who like to work and are good at it. When we are clearing trails, these guys are always looking around to see what needs to

happen next. And I like to be out in the woods. It feels good to come back to camp tired at night.'

Mike Overby lives in Dallas and Angel Fire and is 70. He was a smokejumper in Montana. He has been a TRAMPS member for 15 years. 'This crew is hardworking and the average age is pretty high. When we're working on projects, we relive old times, tell stories. It's a brotherhood.'

Marco Rivera (Associate), lives in Angel Fire. He is 62 and enjoys backpacking and being in the mountains. 'I hike a lot of these trails and know how congested they can get with downfall. I clear these trails because I'm retired, and I can.'

Allison Stout is 61 and a large animal veterinarian who practices out of Las Cruces. He was a smokejumper in Idaho for eight years and likes the work ethic of the TRAMPS members. 'I get to hang out with retired jumpers. We are all adventurous, good natured, hardworking, and disciplined.'

Doug Wamsley is 78 and lives in Denver. He's a former smokejumper and has been a TRAMPS member since 2004. 'I like being with these guys. We have a common bond, like a club. I do this because there aren't enough places like this. Ride into the Vega Del Oso, this big, beautiful meadow, and see all the wildlife. Having access is very important.'



Doug Wamsley cutting a tree

Alan Wonders lives in Dallas and is 66. He was not a smokejumper but was invited by Mike to join TRAMPS. 'I like being in the mountains and on the trail and feeling like it's not just self-indulgence. I've hiked so many trails, I want to give something back. It's more than contributing money, it's giving man hours.'

Big Pryor Mountain Trail Project 2018 Custer/Gallatin National Forest Jack Sterling (MSO 66)

The project crew consisted of Jack Sterling (MSO 66), Bruce Morey (MSO 67), Chuck Hull (MSO 67), Don Whyde (MSO 66), Joe Sterling (MSO 73), David Thompson (MSO 68), James Kuhn (MSO 66), and our Chef John Brastrup.



(L-R) standing: James Kuhn, Joe Sterling, Jack Sterling, Dave Thompson, John Brastrup, Don Whyde, Chuck Hull. Sitting: Bruce Morey

We started Sunday with a trip to the top of Big Pryor Mountain on the trail to Crater Ice Cave which was a new trail to work on this year. Allie Wood, Trails Supervisor of the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer/Gallatin National Forest, led the way and we found Crater Ice Cave fairly well covered with snow. Allie does ultra marathons when not supervising trails in the Beartooth Ranger District. Her hiking ability has not diminished since last year. The trail is only two miles but has 1700 feet elevation gain.

The crew had two trails to clear. One that we worked on last year starting where we had left off last year, and the new one going to Crater Ice Cave. We were able to remove an overhanging tree we had left last year and worked our way almost to the top of the ridge the trail goes up. Once on top the ridge, it is fairly level until it comes out of the trees. We walked down to where we left off on Monday afternoon. We were able to finish clearing the Big Pryor Mountain trail with long hours Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, the Forest Service brought fencing material for barricades and sign posts for where the trail came out of the woods and at the road. The road was very rough and

it was decided that we would come back the next week on four wheelers and plant the posts and put up the jack fence for barricades.

Wednesday we started early and worked our way to the top to finish. We didn't want to have to climb back up the next day.

Thursday was a light work day setting posts in three locations for the Crater Ice Cave trail. Don Whyde and Jack Sterling worked the chainsaw. We had one from NSA but couldn't get it to run so we made a trip to Billings Monday evening to secure another saw. Bruce never found a tree he didn't want to saw with his bow saw. Joe Sterling had a DeWalt cordless reciprocating saw that worked great on the smaller trees that Bruce didn't get to first. Chuck Hull, James Kuhn, and David Thompson removed trees that were cut. We did see bears several days on this project. The second day it was decided to drive to the top of the mountain from the south end of the Pryors.

The accommodations were the old Sage Creek Ranger Station for headquarters. Our camp cook again did an excellent job of providing great meals. Don't think anyone lost any weight on this project with his cooking. He was up early with breakfast at 5:00 a.m. and had us on the road by 6 a.m. each morning.

Overall it was an enjoyable project and the crew would be interested in taking on another project on this district if one is available.



James Kuhn, David Thompson



Bruce Morey, Chuck Hull, Jack Sterling



Sawyers: Bruce Morey, Don Whyde, Joe Sterling

Middle East Fork Santa Barbara Trails
Carson National Forest/Pecos Wilderness
Mike Overby (MSO 67)

This trail project was the second in this northern section of the Pecos Wilderness in Carson National Forest. Our 2017 project was building a 40 foot bridge across the West Fork of the Santa Barbara. This year we worked the other two trails – East Fork and Middle Fork trails.

Our Crew included smokejumpers Mike Overby (MSO 67) and Jon Klingel (CJ 65), Associates Mark Rivera and Alan Wonders, and Back Country Horsemen volunteer Piet Werbrouck. A great plus of having Piet was he helped pack in/out and kept horse/donkey at the trail during the project.



(L-R): Alan, Marcos, Mike

We packed in 7 miles on Sunday to the intersection of the two trails. Pack support was provided by Carson National Forest and Piet Werbrouck. Packout was the following Saturday – long week with small crew.

Driving into the trail on Sunday afternoon, we were passed by a speeding Forest Service vehicle with lights flashing and I thought – that is strange – the Forest Service don't usually work weekends? What we found out later was a man-caused fire had just started about 10 miles from the trailhead to the north.

On Monday, we saw a huge smoke cloud rising to our north – the Sardinas fire. We had no idea how big, how far away, and what direction it was moving. By end of the day Monday, we were able to fully clear the East Fork trail to the tree line – done. After returning to camp that afternoon, a message was left from our Forest Service contact who had hiked in and left extra batteries for our FS radio. The message said the fire was approaching 2,000 acres but not moving in our direction – good news. All of Pecos Wilderness was officially closed and we were the only ones in and allowed to stay. He said the extra batteries were to allow us to monitor the fire and call in daily – great.

Other than worrying about that fire, there was a “no open flame” order in place – obviously no late night conversations with beer in hand around a nice campfire.

By the end of the week we cleared 205 downed logs in both trails. Unfortunately, we didn't make it to the tree line on the West Fork trail – next year project.



(L-R): Associates hard at work: Marcos and Piet



Slim our mascot of the week!

2018 Volcanic Adventure Camp Lassen Volcanic National Park Scott "Mouse" Warner (RDD 69)

NSA CA TRAMPS returned June and October 2018 to help open and close the Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP) Volcano Adventure Camp (VAC). This was a follow-up to the NSA CA TRAMPS June 2017 project to do good works with our NPS and Lassen Park Foundation (LPF) friends! We had a strong roster of 16 in early June 2018 when the tasks were putting up the 10 14' x 16' platform tents and assembling the 80 sets of bunks and cabinets. Lassen Park Maintenance ("The Engine Room")--who work tirelessly behind the scenes to provide the basics for both young VAC "campers," their chaperones, and visitors from all over the world asked NSA CA TRAMPS for an early October 2018 return. The fall 2018 assignments for the 12-strong NSA contingent were to take down tents and disassemble cots and bunks. Important extra tasks were to come up with procedures for break down, to "square away" gear for storage, and to expedite future reassembly.

What a wonderful 2018 roster of willing NSA volunteers! Many answered the call for both late spring and early fall with a significant willing "new blood" contingent. Cooperative volunteers lightened the project organizer/Squad Leader's recruitment task and necessary sadistic harassment to get in the completed single page NSA sign-up form. Best of all, no need to levy fines (to good causes like the VAC) nor to convene Kangaroo Court (in absentia) for last minute "no shows."

2018 VAC roster: Bob "Bente" (RDD 88) June/Oct, "Spud" DeJarnette (MSO 49) June/Oct, Bill Wharton (Associate) June/Oct, Ken Svilich (Associate) June, Steve "Waldo" Meyer (MYL 73) June, Bob Harris (RDD 75) June/Oct, "Pepper" Jack Johnson (Associate), June/Oct, Arley Kisling (RDD 69) June, Gordon "Guido" Brazzi (RDD 66) June/Oct, Jim Klump (RDD 64) June, New! Ned "The Fed" Davis (RDD 67) June, Johnny Culbertson (FBX 69) June, John Finnerty (Associate) June/Oct, Murry Taylor (RDD 65) June/Oct, Dorsey "Dors the Hors" Lightner (RDD 89) June/Oct, New! Gene Hamner (MSO 67) Oct, New! Bob "Spider" Smee (MSO 68) Oct, and Scott "Mouse" Warner (RDD 69) June/Oct.



Ned "The Fed" Davis (RDD 67) and Scott "Mouse" Warner (RDD 69), Humboldt State College Forestry classmates at the Volcano Adventure Camp, Lassen NP

June and October the VAC NSA TRAMPS were absolutely magnificent in steady work (some distracting excessive story telling), problem-solving innovation, logistical prowess, work accomplishments, good nature, and camaraderie. Much appreciated was the extra effort on Gordon Brazzi's part with assistance in provisioning (humor made shopping an enjoyable adventure!) and "Dors the Horse" assistance in packing, transport, unpacking outbound (OB) and return (RTB) of more than one "long" (metric) ton equivalent of the camp outfit and provisions. Dependable Steve Meyer was also invaluable with the June "Cargo Run" (OB and RTB), as well as Bob Harris and Jack Johnson in June/Oct.

With winter "cabin-fever--too much time on their hands," several of the NSA CA TRAMPS pondered an "after dinner program" to follow the traditional June "end of project" dinner. In joint NSA-LVNP-LPF consultation, a "pioneer" theme was chosen for both dinner and after dinner. 42 were in attendance, including guests from LVNP and LPF, hosts NSA, and friends John Houston (Redding Fire Department) and brother Matt.



Pioneer ladies historical re-enactors

We were graced with Lassen Park historical re-enactors, pioneer ladies complete with long calico dresses, bonnets, wooden buckets, and pioneer accents of the 1850s. This was in keeping with the nearby Nobles Emigrant trail, which lies just a few hundred yards west of the VAC. NSA volunteers Culbertson and Finnerty earlier took on the task to line the access path from the VAC to the historical trail with rock cairns. No surprise that NSA volunteers played along with the re-enactors: one "character" volunteered to look for the lost cow; another,

wearing his habitual campaign hat and posing as the commander of the cavalry troop long ago posted at nearby Old Station along Hat Creek offered protection from "bad guys." The pioneer ladies remained dubious, pointing to libations clutched in the imposter's fists!

For something different than traditional grilled steaks, a variety of "on the trail" pioneer-style dishes were prepared by CA TRAMPS and John Houston. On the menu were dutch oven smokejumper pack saddle, Basque-Mexican wagon train-mule pack string 'Caldo', pinto beans, cornbread and honey, high country Costa Rican cabbage salad, and Bob Bente-prepared dutch oven desserts.

The after dinner program, was led off with a reading of a portion of the late RC Kersh's piece (past SMOKEJUMPER magazine) about the early 1950s foundation of the Redding Smokejumper Base and his time (1939) in the Lost Creek CCC Camp--exactly the same site of the VAC today! Next was a recitation from memory "Spell of the Yukon" by Robert Service in a gravelly "whiskey voice" by our very own Murry Taylor. Next the "master smokejumper" read a short piece from his first book, of how smokejumpers during frenetic "fire busts" take on the many simultaneous critical tasks to meet the challenges of multiple, widespread forest fires.



NSA TRAMPS, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lassen Park Foundation
after dinner program



The world's a stage: Gordon
Brazzi

Then the final “*pièce de résistance*” was Steve Meyer reading from Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” Act II, Scene 7 the famous “all the world’s a stage” as an introduction to multi-talented Gordon Brazzi’s own interpretation of the famous soliloquy. Emerging from stately jeffrey pines, Gordon’s “spell binding” contemporary rendition--complete with references to Lassen Park’s natural grandeur, dropping in by parachute, rodeo bull riding, and even shifting sands--was pronounced by one reviewer as “deep.” Bravo, Bravo!

The early fall NSA return to the Volcano Adventure Camp was different with localized Mt. Lassen precipitation in the air. Indeed, on work day 2, copious rain fell throughout much of the day. With just two planned work days (June - October) and a previous day as set-up and a final 4th half day to break camp, daunting tasks were to get the bunks and cabinets disassembled, stowed, and the large tents down--dry if at all possible. Facing the possibility of autumn rain (despite relentless NorCal drought), arrangements had been made to, if

necessary, with the CA smokejumpers and the Northern USFS Region 5 fire cache, bring in and dry down under cover wet VAC tents. Rain fell hard early and throughout day 2. Volunteers sensibly staged a “mutiny,” nine pledging to stay an extra day to take down tents (each under a protective fly) in dry conditions--if weather was to be cooperative.



G Hamner, M Taylor, B Harris, J Finnerty, "Pepper Jack" Johnson breaking down bunks for winter storage

To fill the time, a smaller end-of-project dinner was scheduled (smaller guest list) and newcomer NSA Bob Smee had a special treat lined up: under the cover of the Osprey Pavilion "rum tasting" from samples from all over the world! What a treat! Many professed not being fond of rum--not any longer! Profound discourse ensued in consideration of the samples: "The one from Jamaica, the other from that Caribbean Island, India, SE Asia, the UK; tastes and notes of this and that!"

Work day 2 rain dampened the "end of project dinner" even under cover and it was

a wet, cold night. The next morning: weak sunshine, a shower or so, intermittent drifting overcast... then, drying wind and sunshine! TRAMPS sprang into action, minimized distraction from "jump stories," and took down and stowed 9 tents in tight fashion in manti-like bundles that would go up well (although too heavy) on Decker pack saddles. On day 1, stowed tent 10 looked like a "biscuit" with too much baking powder; day 3 tents 9-1 were tidy, tight likenesses of "While the Bannock Bakes" by Yukon Poet Robert Service. So ended the work tasks in a remarkable outcome, as all gear was stowed in good order under the cover of the Eagle Pavilion.



S Warner & G Hamner "Manti-Up" tent for winter storage

This NSA CA TRAMPS report cannot close without acknowledgement of yet another "October surprise." To liven things up, "Bente" brought to the Volcano Adventure Camp his beautifully restored Ford 1916 Model T! Bob "Bente," among his many talents, is a restorer and collector of vintage automobiles. Iconic photos of the 1915-16 Mt Lassen eruption often include vintage autos of that era! Lassen Park and Lassen Park Foundation friends, NSA TRAMPS, and "pilgrim" tourists were delighted with Model T "touring" of the VAC, past the popular Manzanita Lake Campgrounds, to the north maintenance facility and fire station, and back.



Back to the past: 1916 Ford Model T
S. Warner and Bente with Mount Lassen



Mount Lassen eruption 1915-16

NSA CA TRAMPS look forward to the 2019 opening and closing of the Volcano Adventure Camp for kids in Lassen Volcanic National Park. Along with good works in the woods and nostalgic return to smokejumper camaraderie, NSA is helping with a great cause for kids not otherwise having a chance to get out in the woods.

Along with being in and learning about the great outdoors, we may even get a few “campers” pursuing natural resource careers or even as smokejumpers. There have actually been a few before who benefitted and received encouragement from outreach programs such as the Volcano Adventure Camp, like our happy, ever-positive, late Milford Preston RDD 74 from Oakland CA, who possessed a special zest for life and love for the smokejumpers. “Changed my life, Mouse!” he shouted at me followed by his contagious laugh over the rush of air slipping past the open plane door and the sound of the engines. Then out the door ‘Milf went--“jumpers away!”



Milford Preston (RDD 74) (2nd from left) with his beloved smokejumpers, somewhere in Alaska in the late 1970s

Bowery Guard Station #2
Sawtooth National Recreation Area
Jim Burleigh (MSO 58)



We shall gather at the river – again. And, indeed we did along the East Fork of the Salmon within sight of the White Cloud mountains, awesome--inspiring. The superlatives flow in ceaseless praise of the surroundings where the Stoleson/Daniels crew met July 11-15 at the Bowery Guard Station in the Sawtooth Recreation Area near Stanley, Idaho to renew friendships, share stories and work. The crew pictured above left to right: Jim Rush (MYC 65) aka the quiet one, ol reliable; Larry Nelsen (MSO 56) referred to as iron grip Nelsen, chainsaw Nelsen, Mr. Rounds; Tom Wilks (GAC 87) who made it clear that it's Wilks without an "e" and no, no relative was at the Ford Theatre April 14, 1865; Gary Hendrix, (Associate) one of us, Mr. Steady; Bill Ward, (MSO 63) best-dressed crew member, Mr. Unassuming, Mr. Capable; Chuck Fricke, (GAC 61) Mr. philosopher, Mr. gracious listener; Deb Peters,(FS) the crew beauty. Digger Daniels, (MSO 61) Mr. quips from Digger's lips set the tone for the day, "the only thing that will make us move is the shade"; Chuck Orona, (Associate/Cook) Mr. courteous, and our cook; James R. Burleigh, (MSO 58) aka Jim. Ron Stoleson (MSO 56) was not present for the group photo but joined us later. Crew members unable to attend were Charlie Brown, Doug Howard, Roland Pera, and Neil Nylander. Their presence is awaited in 2019 when again we gather at the river.

Mornings dawned clear and cool. We hunted for a bit of sun upon emerging from our cocoons. Later, it was shade that called us when temps reached 90F. We ate like kings...before, during, and after work. A tip-of-the-hat to Chuck Orona, who's culinary creations helped keep everyone smiling and to Johnson's Corner restaurant,

Johnstown, CO, supplier of all food for the week and where Chuck works. The aroma of fresh perked coffee served as a magnet for sleepy-heads and brought us to the Bowery Cabin each morning at 0630, where we waited for the ring of the breakfast bell while engaged in friendly banter.

Before work began, Mr. Ed Canady, Recreation Specialist for the Sawtooth National Forest, kept our attention glued to his words on safety and ticks. Alas, no tick removal specialists were provided, checking was done by the buddy-system. We were admonished to use plenty of sunscreen and drink lots of water. As a precaution, a daily litmus test would be administered by the crew urologist. The color yellow would indicate proper functioning of the kidneys and that all was well. To the best of this writer's knowledge all crew members passed.....the test, that is.

Work? What's that? Oh yeah, we did. Several thousand feet of barb-wire fencing along the river and elsewhere nearby were removed and replaced so the fence could be laid down to permit passage of wildlife when not used to contain livestock. Other fencing areas were repaired during the course of our five-day sojourn to the Bowery. True, there were breaks mid-morning and afternoon; essential, given the temperatures and ages of the crew. Breaks were a time to listen to the Robins chirping, watch the Mountain Bluebirds flitting, gaze upon the profusion of Scarlet Gilia decorating the dry landscape, allow our heads to rest on our chests for a bit, and hear the silence broken with sighs too deep for words. At last, a joke.....don't let anybody tell you that Digger is full of _____ (each crew member can add their favorite descriptor here).....and the spell was broken and back to work we went.

As always, evenings were a time for stories; sometimes plaintive stories of Viet Nam, multiple tours, chaos, rescue, and healing. Surely, there were hilarious stories as well: "don't make the rocks so big, Digger". A bottle of Old Forester was drained, signed by everyone and left in the Bowery Guard Cabin as evidence that the Stoleson/Daniels crew "was here".

Thursday evening was guest night. Present were Kirk Flannigan, Ranger for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA); Brian Anderson, Deputy Ranger SNRA; Daniel Fisher, Recreation Technician SNRA; Jay Dorr, Trail Crew Foreman, SNRA; our Deb Peters SNRA; and Ron Stoleson, keeper of the flame number 1. The evening was a bitter-sweet time: the torch of crew management was officially passed by its founder, Ron Stoleson to Digger Daniels. As a tribute to Ron we borrow sacred words to declare, "you have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith". We are all better men for the good will your leadership has fostered among us. We salute you and offer thanks in gratitude for the opportunities, since the beginning of this century (18 years), you have brought our direction: opportunities to be of service to the country we love, relive times when we were much younger and all seemed possible; and to bask in the comradery of shared experiences few can replicate. Together we proclaim, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Too, the evening bought an expression of joy with the recognition that the incomparable Digger Daniels, our golden-throated story teller, our keeper of the flame number 2, accepted the scepter of responsibility for leadership of Sawtooth Crew Team A (to distinguish it from Sawtooth Crew Team B). It is fitting that this be so. Digger has faithfully participated in every crew outing. He is Mr. Grit with just the right touch of bonhomie to lead a bunch of miscreants in work and in fun. Welcome Mr. Daniels. Until, we meet again, by the river.

Where the Bluebird sings and the Scarlet Gilia blooms

