

# Forest Service Smokejumpers Credited With Halting Many Bad Fires

**By GORMAN HOGAN**  
**PORTLAND** — Two Forest Service firefighters whisked down out of the sky one bright morning last summer, parachuting toward a thin smoke spiral, the dreaded danger signal in the Pacific Northwest's timbered wilderness. The airborne pair were prepared to make quick work of the blaze before it could spread out of control in the dry woods.

To their surprise, they wound up at the campfire of a group of teen-aged girls, busily preparing breakfast. Instead of putting out the fire they sat down and enjoyed a cup of coffee at the Eastern Washington girls' summer camp.

But these firefighters and others like them — known as smokejumpers — seldom find conditions so pleasant.

They are the rugged and highly trained shock troops of the Forest Service firefighting force, first on call to fight the flames—usually

set by lightning—that threaten the millions of acres of inaccessible timberlands.

Forest officials say the value and increasing importance of the smokejumpers has never been better demonstrated than this year, one of the worst of recent years for lightning fires with 1,378.

**NUMBER DOUBLED**  
 The past summer more than twice as many smokejumpers parachuted to double the number of fires in Oregon, Washington and Northern California than in any previous year—and limited damage to only about 500 acres.

This compares with 59,706 acres burned from 1,538 lightning fires in 1938 and 39,088 acres burned from 1,278 lightning fires in 1939, both years prior to the organization of the smoke jumping force.

"This year's record results from faster planes which permit the jumpers to cover a wider area and from an increased awareness of what they can do," says Monte Pierce, regional aerial operations officer for the Forest Service. "If we had not had the smokejumpers this year you can guess at what could have happened."

The serious fire losses in 1938 and 1939 led to the first experimental work with smokejumpers in 1939 at the present Okanogan aerial project between Twisp and Winthrop in Eastern Washington.

Experiments were so successful, seven men were stationed at the airstrip in 1940 and the first jumps to actual fires were made.

In 1943 the Siskiyou aerial project was established at Illinois Valley in Southern Oregon. Today these two make up Region 6, covering Oregon, Washington and a 200-mile section of Northern California.

**PERSONNEL**  
 The Region has six planes, four of them for jumpers and two for scouting. At the Okanogan project are 24 jumpers, three squadron leaders, a project foreman and pilot. Siskiyou personnel includes 31 jumpers, four squadron leaders, a foreman and pilot. Each covers a maximum radius of 25 air miles, meeting about at Portland. Other jumpers are at Missoula, Mont., and at McCall, Idaho.

Most of them are college students who return year after year. Training is about the same as that given to a football player with plenty of running, jumping and negotiating obstacle courses. Inexperienced men get eight hours of training daily for six weeks and make seven practice jumps before

joining the regulars. The jumper wears boots, helmet and face mask, and carries gloves, an extra pair of socks and orange colored signaling panels. At least two men jump to every fire, and the leader has a compass and a marked map.

After landing, the jumpers signal for their fire packs which include two days rations, a sleeping bag, canteen, first aid kit, shovel and Pulaski tool (combined ax and

hoe) to be dropped from the circling plane. They also may signal for additional equipment.

Injuries have been remarkably few among jumpers in Region 6. There has never been a fatality and the Okanogan project, for example, has never had a lost time jumping accident in seven years.

Because of the speed with which smokejumpers can reach the most inaccessible areas, fires are normally limited to a half acre.

A notable fire fought by the smokejumpers, though, blackened 300 acres on the Chelan National Forest near the Canadian border in 1943.

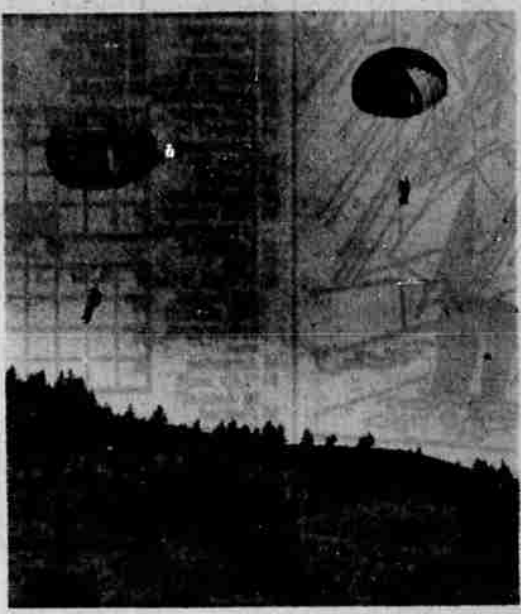
That was during the Japanese incendiary balloon scare in World War II and, as a protection, 200 paratroopers were stationed at Pendleton. The Forest Service first sent in 10 smokejumpers from the Siskiyou project, made up principally at the time of conscientious objectors. As the fire spread 87 paratroopers jumped to the fire—the largest number of airborne men ever to fight a fire in this country.



**PRACTICE SMOKEJUMPING** is accomplished by these jumpers of the U.S. Forest Service on these suspension rigs, emulating positions in which they might find themselves if caught in tree branches in making jumps to fires. Smokejumpers carry equipment to free themselves from trees. AP photo.



**NOT MEN FROM MARS** but two U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers are poised at the doorway of this plane, in position to make a jump. Face masks, helmets and gloves are worn as protection against trees when landing in woods to fight fires. Other equipment is in pack sacks on the jumper's legs. AP photo.



**NEAR LANDING** these smokejumpers for the U.S. Forest Service are shown here nearing the ground in a drop into a clearing from a forest service aircraft. Airborne fire fighting forces are credited with sharply reducing fires in inaccessible areas of the Pacific Northwest. Units are stationed in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. AP photo.

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## Girl Wins 4-H Trip

**LAKEVIEW** — Shirley Scoville, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Scoville of Lakeview, has been announced as one of 19 club members in Oregon to receive a trip to the National 4-H Club Congress in Chicago November 25-29.

Shirley was announced a state winner in home improvement for her outstanding record of 37 completed projects during her nine years of club work. They include cooking, food preservation, jams and jellies, knitting, bread baking and home making. She has held every office in 4-H Club work, attended five 4-H summer school sessions and has an excellent high school and church record.

The story of the member's 4-H work is written by each contestant entering competition for the awards and a detailed record is supplied from the local and state level.

Last year Mrs. Mary Odegaard of Lakeview was chosen for a trip to the congress as the outstanding woman 4-H Club leader in the state.



**A TRIP TO CHICAGO** was won by Shirley Scoville, Lakeview, to attend the National 4-H Club Congress November 25-29. She is one of 19 members in Oregon to win the trip for outstanding achievement in 4-H Club work.

## Eastern Oregon Area Chiefly Democratic

**Editor's Note:** This is one of a series of Oregon political surveys made by Paul W. Harvey Jr., Associated Press correspondent at Salem.

**By PAUL W. HARVEY JR.**  
**BAKER** — Here in Baker, the Republican and Democratic

leaders battle hard against each other, then go out for coffee together.

They have strong political feelings, as do lots of Eastern Oregonians. But nobody seems to get offended personally.

In this predominantly Democratic area, the Democrats are working hard, while the Republicans are criticizing their candidates for not working harder.

What it all adds up to is that Wayne Morse is expected to beat Doug McKay in this section—but President Eisenhower and other Republican candidates are popular.

The issues in Umatilla County, where there are the big wheat growers and McNary Dam, are

the Eisenhower farm program and public power. In Baker, Union and Walla Walla counties, it's mostly power.

Umatilla County has the only pro-Stevenson daily paper in Eastern Oregon, the Pendleton East Oregonian, which hasn't however, favored either McKay or Morse.

The newspaper came out against Eisenhower largely because of the health issue, saying Vice President Nixon is "openly mistrusted by many." It said Stevenson would be "one of the great presidents of all times."

However, President Eisenhower is very popular in Eastern Oregon. So is Gov. Elmo Smith, who comes from John Day and used to be a mayor of Ontario.

Lucien Arant, Baker publisher, attributes much of Morse's popularity to the fact that "Morse meets more people."

The same thing was said in all of the Eastern Oregon communities. Morse shakes lots of hands on the streets, while McKay confines most of his campaigning to political rallies.

Arant, whose county's Democratic vote is sharply divided between conservative and liberal factions, reports some strange twists. He knows a union president who is for McKay, and many Republicans for Morse.

When McKay filed at the last minute for the Senate last spring, the Baker County Republican leaders were already beating the drums for Phil Hitchcock. That left some wounds that haven't healed. The situation is similar in other counties.

The Hell's Canyon issue still is potent in this region, even though Baker is getting lots of business out of the construction of the

dams by Idaho Power Co. A veteran Republican, Colon R. Eberhard of La Grande, a former state legislator, predicts that Morse will sweep Union and Walla Walla counties, with the other races in doubt.

Al Ullman, Baker Democrat who is making a second try to defeat Congressman Sam Con, also of Baker, will be helped by the public power supporters. This issue carried Ullman to a lead in Baker County two years ago.

Friends of Ullman and Con jocularly express doubt whether either will last until election day. They appear haggard and worn from the rigors of the intensive campaign they are conducting.

There is a feeling throughout Eastern Oregon that the candidates started their barrage too early, and that the people are beginning to get tired of it. Interest in some areas is beginning to sag.

## AF Examines Charred Wreck

**LAKE CHARLES, La. (UP)** — The Air Force examined charred pieces of a B47 Stratofortress bomber today to try to learn what caused the plane to explode on takeoff, killing its crew of four.

The six-engine craft exploded into flames just off the end of a runway here Thursday after apparently trying to halt its takeoff run. The wreckage of the plane was scattered more than 1,000 yards.

Four officers aboard the bomber were killed instantly. They were identified as Capt. Daniel A. Hawk, 34, Pasadena, Calif., aircraft commander; Capt. Edgar Shields, 36, Jacksonville, Fla., instructor pilot; 1st Lt. Richard C. Ramsdell, 25, Gloversville, N.Y., co-pilot, and Capt. Foster E. Sherwood, 37, Wayne, Mich., observer.

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