



An Interview with Monroe “Spud” DeJarnette

Boise, Idaho

August 13, 2022

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- [00:00:05] **James Wall:** So, it is Saturday, August 13, 2022. We are in Boise, Idaho and we're talking with—what's your first name?
- [00:00:16] **Spud DeJarnette:** Monroe.
- [00:00:17] **James Wall:** Monroe. But you go by Spud.
- [00:00:19] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yes. That was my nickname given to me by my grandmother and it stuck.
- [00:00:28] **James Wall:** We're talking with Spud DeJarnette. Is that accurate?
- [00:00:31] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.
- [00:00:33] **James Wall:** Spud DeJarnette. We're interviewing you for the National Museum of Forest Service History. Could you tell me when and where you were born?
- [00:01:09] **Spud DeJarnette:** Okay. I was born in Sandpoint, Idaho on May 1, 1929.
- [00:01:20] **James Wall:** And you got to Missoula [Montana] as soon as you could, right?
- [00:01:22] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, I got to Missoula with my parents about 1930 or 1931. I can't recall exactly what the target date was, but thereabouts. I was one or two years old when we moved.
- [00:01:54] **James Wall:** And what do you remember about Missoula from the time you were growing up? What type of town was Missoula?
- [00:02:01] **Spud DeJarnette:** We were living in a rented house on Rollins Street to begin with. And I remember that Colleen Cooney was a little girl next door, and her grandfather had been a governor of the state of Montana. And so anyway, then they moved, and I actually went to the first grade in old Roosevelt School and finished that year. And mom and dad bought a house out on Hastings Avenue, which was right on the outskirts of town, within a block of Mount Sentinel and the area south of Hastings Avenue was a ranch. And I'm trying to remember.
- [00:04:18] **James Wall:** I've heard that Missoula was all smokestacks, and it was real—all these timber mills were in Missoula back in the old days, and they

would just pump smoke into sky, and it wasn't the best place to be around in the winter. So, we were talking about Missoula and where you grew up and the old days.

[00:04:47] **Spud DeJarnette:** The ranch south of Missoula, on one side of it was the first airport, Hale Field. And it was actually the Jumper Depot as well. We trained at Ninemile, out at Ninemile, and then we were farmed out around the region on various projects, mostly piling brush, logging slash, working on blister rust. And that was about the extent of it, except once in a while—I digress. I'm not talking about Missoula except for the airport there. Bob Johnson and his brother Dick, started an air flying service and they offered lessons, flying lessons, and they also hauled a lot of cargo into the back country. And Dick was killed in an accident about 1936, I think, if I remember right. And Bob carried on with the business and developed it and got the contract for flying smoke jumpers. And that was just about six blocks from our house, that airfield. We lived on the corner, when mom and dad bought it in 1936 it had just been finished and we moved in. We had three bedrooms and a sewing room. And the sewing room was my bedroom. And it was the fourth bedroom, so to speak.

[00:07:46] Yeah, it was an unusual house. It was shingled with asbestos shingles, and it had asbestos insulation. And it had a basement and the basement leaked. And I remember that my dad dug all the way around the house and sealed that basement with a creosote compound. It had a septic tank which filled up very rapidly and we were fortunate that the city of Missoula extended the sewer line just about the time that septic tank was all finished. I mean, its usefulness was done.

[00:09:04] We had a big backyard. It had extended from the house back to the alley and right close to the alley dad built a swing set, it had a trapeze and a swing, and we and the neighbor kids, we made good use of that—doing pull-ups and you grabbed that bar and pull yourself up and then your pull your feet and legs over the bar until you were hanging on your hands and your feet were—your legs were on the other side of the bar. And we had a name for that, and I can't think of what the name was. But anyway, we had a contest as I recall, and the winner of the contest was the first person that could do one of those pullovers and I wasn't first. [Laughs]

[00:10:51] And my childhood friend was Dick Strong, Richard Strong. His dad worked for the Forest Service as well. And they moved in shortly after we moved in. And Dick and I began the second grade at the Paxton Grade

School, which was about eight blocks down the street from where we lived. And we would walk that distance from the time I was in the second grade until I graduated from the Paxton High School and enrolled in Missoula County High School, which was situated on Higgins Avenue on the south side of the river, and it dated back, that building dated back to the time when my dad was in school, and he went to that school.

[00:12:28] **James Wall:** So, was your dad from Missoula?

[00:12:30] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yes. My grandparents homesteaded outside of Missoula in a little town called Clinton [Montana]. And they were up in a canyon with the 160-acre plot. He built a log cabin and he had cleared enough so that he could have enough hay, put up enough hay to feed the animals. They had chickens and pigs and horses. And he was in the process in the summer of 1910 pulling stumps out of the field that he had cleared. And when he built the cabin, he built the chimney for the fireplace out of the straw and mud, and it caught fire. And that spread to the rest of the cabin and started a forest fire around the cabin. And my grandmother grabbed some towels and blankets and ran outside and got them wet from the well with well water and took it out into the part of the field that was plowed. And then they carried such as they could from the house from the cabin before it was demolished. And that's what they had when all was said and done was what they had on those blankets.

[00:15:11] And granddad didn't feel like rebuilding. So, they moved into Missoula, and they moved to the Orchard Homes, and they got a little house and four acres, and then twenty acres on the west side of the road. It was Curtis Avenue and Avenue is a misplant. It was a dirt road. [laughs] And he was speculating, hoping that the Milwaukee Railroad would put a division point there on that twenty acres. And instead, they, Milwaukee moved their division point up to Alberton along on Old Highway 10. And so, my granddad just sold them four- or five-acre parcels.

[00:16:48] And as I said, my dad grew up there. He was about twelve years old when they moved into Missoula. And he went to the Orchard Homes, I think, if I remember correctly. Oh golly. I can't think of the name of that school. But anyway, it was still in existence when I was in the—going to school out on Paxton on the south side of town.

[00:17:45] **James Wall:** How did your dad get into the Forest Service?

[00:17:48] **Spud DeJarnette:** Well, he graduated from high school and enrolled in the university and the forestry school. He had a whole love of the out of doors from the very beginning. Actually, his favorite activity was rounding up the horses in the morning and going out from the cabin into the surrounding forest and figuring out where their favorite meadow was [laughs] and bring them back into the cabin—into the barn. And as I say, that was his favorite time of the day. Enrolling in forestry just came natural to him and he graduated in timber management and got an appointment, a permanent appointment from the Forest Service over in Sandpoint. And the old Kaniksu and Kootenai Forests [Montana] were undertaking their first timber survey at that time. And the ranger, when dad pulled in, he said, "Don't bother to open your trunk." He said, "You're not going to need that. I have a camp for you set up over—and wherever it was—all you'll need is your knapsack and what you can put in it." And so, dad stored his trunk in Sandpoint, and he didn't see it again until March of the next year. [Laughs] And in the meantime, he was in a field camp. He just had a tent that he moved from project to project. Basically, he would set up a...

[00:21:00] **James Wall:** Like a lab. Yeah, he was a science guy, right? He was real brainy.

[00:21:06] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, and then he would survey the timber in the—plot—that's what I was trying to think of. He would establish a plot and mark the boundaries and then survey the timber in that plot and come up with [unclear][00:21:26] of it and the number of board feet of lumber would be produced in that plot. And then they would magnify that by other plots of similar size and similar timber to come up with a figure for the forest. And he also worked on the telephone system that the Forest Service was putting in. [coughs] It was a landline, a number nine wire strung through the trees and then grounded at either end.

[00:22:27] And I had a system like that in Glacier Park [Montana] when I worked up in the Polebridge area on the North Fork of the Flathead. I could put my ear to the wire and hear the conversations traversing the wire. Anyway, that was the original Forest Service line of communication and that, from the ranger station, those wires went out to the lookouts and to the guard cabins stations. And he helped establish all of that in the Kootenai country up in North Sandpoint.

[00:23:36] That's where he met my mom. And she was teaching school in Sandpoint, and he would hike in on the weekend and attend a dance in Sandpoint.

And he met my mom, and I forget what his exact words were, it's in the story that he wrote for the... Anyway, they were married and lived in Sandpoint for five years, and he worked out of Sandpoint. My older sister was born three years later. I was born, and then my younger sister was born in Missoula when we came back.

[00:24:55] Anyway, we were living in on Hastings in a new house, in a new division. And in those days, they didn't come in and build a subdivision with just two or three styles of house. In those days, the houses were constructed by independent carpenters, and they were whatever style he chose for that particular house. And the house next to it would be totally different and so on.

[00:26:00] And we had a grand time. There were a lot of kids in the neighborhood from the university over to Hastings in a three-block wide area and two blocks long. And we did everything. Played kick the can. We played tackle football on the back yards across—there were no fences and there weren't any hedges. And it was just straight lawn all the way across for a couple of blocks. We would have two teams of about three people. [laughs] And we also played a lot of sandlot baseball in the plot of—for a house across the street in front of us, owned by a lawyer named Builan [phonetic]. And he was building his house—it took him twenty years to finish it. He was dead before it was done. And his daughter, who was my age, took it over and finished the house. And it was finished long after we moved. So, from the second grade to the eighth grade, that was my territory, you might say.

[00:28:24] And in the middle of my eighth grade or seventh grade year, dad was transferred to Colville, Washington where he was the [Forest] Supervisor of the Colville [National] Forest. And so, we moved to Colville, and then I spent my eighth grade year in Colville and my freshman and sophomore year in high school in Colville. And I remember it was a grand—really was a nice little town.

[00:29:18] Those were the war years. And were very close to Spokane [Washington], which was a major depot for transferring everything from Flying Fortresses to Europe and Asia and also a “repple depple,” what we called a “repple depple,” was a reemployment depot for troops and they were transferred from Spokane to the theaters of combat. And so, we were very close to that. It was just eighty miles away.

**[00:30:20]** I remember having a cousin who was a lieutenant in the Air Force, and he enlisted from Alabama, I think, got his commission, and was transferred up to Spokane. And I spent a weekend with him crawling through Liberator bombers and Flying Fortresses and B-25s and B-26s. It was a boy's delight. And then the war ended in 1945, and dad was transferred back to Missoula, and they bought a house on Eddy Avenue, 402 Eddy. And it was a big Victorian that had some age to it and a lovely house. I had a room upstairs in the back, and that was a room by myself.

**[00:32:00]** **James Wall:** Was that your first room by yourself?

**[00:32:06]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, right. And we had a one-room apartment above the garage that we rented out to university students and mostly they were vets that came back. And I remember one vet in particular, he had attained the rank of captain in the artillery, and he was on the beach at Anzio, and he survived it. And in the breakout then he and his artillery went up to Italy, into southern France where the war ended for him. And he came back, and he was an English major, wound up as a PhD English teacher in Boulder, Colorado. And then we, or at least I, lost track of him.

**[00:33:39]** Anyway, my junior and senior year I was at Missoula County High School, the same building that my dad where my dad went to high school. And my chief sports were skiing, or my chief sport was skiing, and there were no ski areas around Missoula. So, we located a basin, the Marshall Bowl it was called, about four miles out of town. And we used to ski the trail up to the bowl and find a tree well that was big enough to have a camp, and we'd set up a fire and put down our sleeping bags and put a bough, cut boughs and cover over the top so that any snow that the fire melted wouldn't come cascading down into the camp. It was stopped by that.

**[00:35:13]** Anyway, we would spend the weekends up there in Marshall Bowl, and it was beautiful powder, just great Rocky Mountain powder. And we actually learned to ski well enough so that we could take the four-mile trail back down and get from the top to the bottom of the trail without falling. [Laughs] And then we expanded, we got a permission to use the Montana Power cabin back behind, gosh, what was the name of that mountain? But it had a bowl, and then the cabin was popped there, and then the Montana Power come, they used that for snow surveys to get water content for the next year to run their power plant.

**[00:36:47]** Anyway, we got permission to use that cabin, and it had a barn that the key for the cabin was hanging from the ridge pole of the barn. And of course, the snow built up to the point where it was just above the hay door going into the loft. And we would dig that out, open the door, and then reach up and get the key off the ridge pole, down and dig down into the cabin. And we would spend weekends at that cabin. It was a seven-mile trip in from the road up over the mountain and then down into the bowl.

**[00:38:00]** And again, we learned how to handle the slopes on around that bowl. And we were very careful. Our parents had schooled us very well in where we would likely to have an avalanche or start one. And so, we avoided the whole wall of the circ, and we skied the out slopes down into the cabin, skied down, climb back up, ski down, [laughs] climb back up. And sleep in the cabin with the fire going and the door open because the fire uses up the oxygen in the cabin, and you can suffocate inside of a tightly snowbound cabin if there's no access to outside air. So, we would leave with the door open, and when it snowed, the snow would cover up our tracks and fill in the entrance to the cabin. So, we would have to dig our way out. [Laughs]

**[00:39:37]** And we, mom and dad and my friends' parents, the Strongs and a couple of others, we spent our weekends doing that. And our parents never worried about us. My dad said that [laughs] "If he doesn't know his way around by this time, he is never going to learn to his way around those mountains." We grew up in the mountains of Western Montana, and we skied, and we hiked the Mission Range. That was Indian property, but they hadn't put any restrictions on it.

**[00:40:46]** In fact, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] in the 1930s built a trail right up the canyon underneath, oh gosh, what is the name of that peak? It's the southernmost peak in the Mission Range. We climbed it several times, and every time we climbed it, there would be a small group of Rocky Mountain goats following us up the mountain. They would be on that side of the ravine and we'd be on this side of the ravine. And it was just marvelous to watch those goats negotiate the bluffs as they went up. Just amazing.

**[00:42:17]** **James Wall:** So, it's safe to say you were already an outdoors kid.

**[00:42:20]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. Yes.



[00:42:24] **James Wall:** When did you start to think maybe you'll do some Forest Service work without...

[00:42:28] **Spud DeJarnette:** And that actually was not my first mountain. My first mountain was Mount Sentinel, which was just a block from the house on East Hastings Street, and aside from our backyards, that mountain was our playground. We were up on top of that mountain when I was about in the fourth grade.

[00:43:02] **James Wall:** Did they have the M trail at that point?

[00:43:05] **Spud DeJarnette:** No, the M trail was about a mile toward the river from us. That went up from behind the bleachers in the football field for the university football field and went straight up the mountain. And it was many, many years later that they actually contoured a trail up to the M, and they put barbed wire coils below the trail to keep the kids from cutting the trails and going straight up. They had to go this way. And that trail combined, or actually took off from a trail that went from the university clear across to the canyon. Gosh, my names...

[00:44:30] **James Wall:** Pattee Canyon.

[00:44:36] **Spud DeJarnette:** Pattee Canyon, yeah. Over to Pattee Canyon and about directly above our house on the trail, another trail took off and cut back up the mountain to an [unclear] [00:44:58] that had been an exploratory tunnel that somebody put in some time and didn't find anything, so they just forgot it. And we used to play in there. We could get back into it probably about ten, maybe ten yards and then it just became too small an area to work, we couldn't even crawl through there, and it didn't go anywhere anyway. We just played around and forgot it. And from there it was just bush shape, bush whacking way up to the top of that first peak, which they called Sentinel. And then there was a Long Ridge that went back into and framed Pattee Canyon. The road on Pattee Canyon, came up out of Missoula, went up and around in a big loop like this, and came out above the Milwaukee tracks and then on into a bridge across the river and over the old Highway 10.

[00:46:38] And so we used to go, when we were dating in high school, of seniors, that was the favorite drive after one of the school dances, was to take your date and go all the way around that loop and come out in East Missoula. And by that time, our parents were about ready to call the highway patrol, [laughs]

because it would be past curfew, couple hours, usually two-three o'clock in the morning.

[00:47:35] And anyway, none of the girls I dated in high school became anything serious. And I played in the dance band. We had a regular dance band instrumentation of four saxes, three trombones and three trumpets, piano, drums. And we were playing the charts from Dorsey Brothers and Count Basie and so on.

[00:48:42] **James Wall:** What instrument did you play?

[00:48:43] **Spud DeJarnette:** I played sax and clarinet.

[00:48:50] **James Wall:** Tenor sax? Alto? Tenor? Alto? Baritone? Which type of saxophone did you play?

[00:48:56] **Spud DeJarnette:** Alto sax. Yeah. I was third alto and clarinet. And when I was a senior, my friends engineered a trip up to—we used to call it—well, it's what they—it's called Lost Trail Pass now. And if I remember right, when I was in high school in the late forties, middle forties, late forties, it was Nez Perce Pass, in honor of the old Nez Perce Trail. The Nez Perce went, came over Lolo, down into Bitterroot Valley and went up the Bitterroot Valley over the mountain, passed down into the Lemhi Valley in Idaho, and then they cut east until they got into the buffalo country. They would cut their winter supply of meat and take it back, all the way back, all over that whole trail, back into Idaho, into the Clearwater country.

[00:50:46] And yeah, it was the Nez Perce Pass. And then some group of people got together and said, "Well, really, let's call this Lost Trail Pass." So, okay. And they got that. And we used to ski up there, and the same way we skied everywhere. We would pack an area and ski down on what we packed, hike back up, ski down, spend two days doing that.

[00:51:34] And anyway, the point of this story is they went up on Friday, and of course I had to play for a dance after the game. And I got into a bus, and the bus took me to the top of the pass. And about two in the morning, the bus stopped. I got off, got my skis, got my pack, and the bus went on down into Salmon [Idaho]. And I hiked over what is now a pass or an area for truckers to check their brakes and so forth before they come down off the pass into Montana. And it was a nice little grove of trees. And we established a camp there in the trees. And I crawled into my bed on my

back in my sleeping bag at two in the morning on a big square panel of canvas that we had. And we had that lying on fir boughs. My buddies grumbled. And I just fell in, got up about four or five hours of sleep, and we got up to start the weekend. And the fire, their campfire had melted its way down to the bare ground about four feet. There was about four feet of snow on the level. Anyway, I shocked a busload of people stopping on the pass [laughs] in the middle of the night to let some crazy kid get off. And yeah, I stood there and had all my stuff and waved to the bus and went down. And then I climbed over to the camp and got some sleep.

**[00:54:50]** Our parents being foresters, we had a friend through them at the Sula Ranger Station, and they went into the station on the way up to the pass, and the ranger loaned them some pack tarps to cover the boughs and keep us up out of the snow. So yeah, I learned to camp in the snow when I was in high school.

**[00:55:53]** **James Wall:** Sounds like it. Do you want a sip of water or take a break?

**[00:55:54]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.

**[00:56:11]** **James Wall:** Then you can tell me how you got into smokejumping .

**[00:56:12]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, I hope I don't, I'm not wandering too much.

**[00:56:16]** **James Wall:** No, no, no. I love it. Every place you mentioned, there's a ski area. There's a ski resort at Lost Trail now.

**[00:56:25]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. Well, now it's a huge ski area.

**[00:56:27]** **James Wall:** Yeah. Lost Trail is a big ski area. Now, Marshall Mountain for a long time was a ski area, but they closed it down, but the lifts are still on that mountain.

**[00:56:35]** **Spud DeJarnette:** It goes from Idaho into Montana.

**[00:56:38]** **James Wall:** Yeah, Marshall Mountain's a big mountain biking mountain there. But for a long time, it was the go-to ski place.

**[00:56:46]** **Spud DeJarnette:** One of the things that I would like to mention is that there was an old cat track down off the mountain on the Idaho side, and it followed the exact route that Lewis and Clark took down in the valley

where the town of Salmon took hold later. Anyway, the general that was chasing [Chief] Joseph over that same trail, and he has a little burg named for him on the Idaho side down about halfway down. Oh gosh. Yeah. Anyway, that's kind of off the subject.

**[00:58:25]** Anyway, we used to ski down that trail and it would intersect the road, the highway, down about a half a mile straight down, a little longer around. And one of the guys would take the car and drive down to the point where we would come out and we would ski down. And this was great, get in the car, go back up to the top, all over again. And we were very proud of the fact that we were retracing Lewis and Clark's steps. [laughs]

**[00:59:17]** **James Wall:** They still have all those historical markers over there.

**[00:59:20]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Across the mountain.

**[00:59:21]** Yeah. And you pretty much were skiing like that. So, it sounds like you enjoyed your winters. Not everybody enjoys winter in Missoula.

**[00:59:32]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Oh, yeah. Well, we loved it. And one time we were coming up to the pass, and I got just beyond Florence [Montana] and hit a patch of black ice and you know, you can't see it. And the car went into a spin and off the road into the ditch, and I was just feet from a fill that the rancher had put across that ditch for egress and ingress, personal use. Anyway, the car was pointed up right up at the pass and we were spun around and down into the ditch and were headed uphill. The skis had come off of the top of the car in the ski rack. They were still on the ski rack. And the ski rack was lying alongside the car, parallel to the car. And there were five of us in the car, and the car was not damaged. So, we put the skis back up on top, and the guys got around the front of the car and I gingerly backed up, and we backed up onto that fill and around, pointed, got back up on the highway and kept on going. We lost maybe a half an hour altogether. [laughs]

**[01:01:51]** **James Wall:** Tough kids.

**[01:01:53]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. And this time I wasn't going as fast because I didn't know where the black ice started and where it ended. As I say, you can't see it, that's why they call it black ice. But boy, it is ice—shear slippery. And we got on up to Hamilton and beyond Hamilton to Darby, and up through Sula, there was a snowpack on the road. And so, it wasn't as slick

as it was with the ice. And we, Montana by that time in the late forties, Montana had improved their side of the road going up to the pass. And Idaho never got around to it until, oh, about 2000 and something. [laughs]

[01:03:16] **James Wall:** Yeah. That's still not an easy road even today to get down. I'm surprised you were able to get there. So, when did you get into smokejumping? I'm assuming you went to college at [unclear] [01:03:26].

[01:03:29] **Spud DeJarnette:** Well, three of my friends whose dads were foresters, went into smokejumping the year we all graduated from high school. And they didn't talk me into it because I was working over in Coeur d'Alene [Idaho], the Fernan District of the Coeur d'Alene Forest. And I enjoyed that, and I had a couple of summers of longevity already. I started in the Forest Service in the blister rust when I was sixteen and graduated to the Fernan District a couple years later. And it was a good summer. I had four fires, and I wound up on Coeur d'Alene Mountain in a lookout at the end of the season.

[01:04:48] And that was an interesting experience because I had a cabin at the bottom on the ground that I lived in and then I had a 50-foot tower that I would climb up on given times during the day to make an observation. And there was a road into the lookout, and it was also a beacon for the airlines. The airlines coming in across from, oh gosh, Billings [Montana], would hop over and land in Harleson [Montana]. Another hop over into Butte [Montana]. Another hop into Helena, and then the flight from Helena [Montana] into Missoula. And anyway, they had a series of beacons on various peaks so that they could fly at night and know where their flight path was. Well, that beacon was sitting right outside of one of my windows, [laughs] and all night long it was just "blip, blip, blip, blip."

[01:06:54] **James Wall:** It'd be tough to get to sleep with that thing going off every two seconds.

[01:06:57] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, it would light up the cabin. [laughs].

[01:07:05] **James Wall:** So, you thought that must have been a nice change of pace to do something a little bit more active than just sitting around in the lookout tower. So smokejumping was probably a bit more thrilling.

[01:07:17] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. And anyway, then I was in my first year of forestry school, and so I took leave of the school in the first month and a half of the

fall quarter to continue working for the district. And by that time, I closed up the lookout, came down and was bunked in an old CCC camp with another forestry student. And we worked on various forestry related projects for a month and a half. And then we went back to school and we were forgiven that amount of time because we were working into our profession and we were, two of us were alongside a dozen others that had been in other places in the region.

**[01:08:49]** And then I went back again the next summer and was a kind of a squad leader on the district project crew. And we were rolling up old telephone wire among other things and working a trailer too along the way and so forth and so on. Had an old cook, and his name was Willie, believe it or not. He was in his late seventies, and he as retired from a logging camp cook, and he was cooking for us. And Lord, you'd get up in the morning and there was everything you could imagine on that table, including cinnamon rolls. He just, oh, he fed us and fed us and fed us. And he loved doing it. He wouldn't let us into the kitchen. We tried to set it up so that we would help him with the dishes. No, he did it all himself. And he did. Yeah.

**[01:10:27]** **James Wall:** Yeah. Those old camp cooks are legendary. Yeah, nobody ever starved.

**[01:10:30]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, that's right.

**[01:10:32]** **James Wall:** People might have put on a few pounds actually.

**[01:10:34]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.

**[01:10:35]** **James Wall:** Of course you probably burned so many calories doing the work you were doing.

**[01:10:41]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Well, we were doing an awful lot of hiking and working in, as I say, sometimes on a road, sometimes on trails, rolling up a wire, you name it, we were doing it. And so, I got back to school, and I changed my major. I was going by the music school, and I did a left turn and walked in and registered. And that began the music part of my career. I had a dual career. I was a technician in the Forest Service, also five summers in Glacier Park up in the North Fork of the Flathead River, Polebridge, Logging Creek. The places rarely visited by people. Yeah, it was for one thing to get from headquarters up to that, over that road, 25 miles, you'd tear the underside of your car apart.

[01:12:10] **James Wall:** Yeah, that's a rough dirt road. Oh, that's up in the north. Yeah, northeast side of the park.

[01:12:17] **Spud DeJarnette:** And it was rocky.

[01:12:20] **James Wall:** Or you puncture your tire probably.

[01:12:22] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. And I loved it. It was 25 miles, we crossed probably about four to five creeks on the way. And this was after I was jumping, and we were getting toward the time I was jumping. Anyway, finally they, in 1949, my buddies prevailed, and I quit the Fernan District and joined the smoke jumpers. And I don't know whether it was my dad's influence, he never tried to influence anything that I did, but just his name associated. He was [G.M.] Monk DeJarnette over the whole region. And I was Spud—and father and son.

[01:13:46] Anyway, I got onto the jumpers, and we trained, there were fifty of us training in up at the old Smoke Jumper Camp at the old CCC camp up at Ninemile. And it had a dirt airstrip. And that's where those pictures were taken. And again, we were lodged in the old CCC camp. We had a cook, and we trained four hours in the morning on skills and fitness. We trained for one hour, we were in the area where we cut and split the wood for the camp stove, for the camp cooking stove. And we used, of course, in those days, we used the crosscut saw and a splitting ax, which is a single bladed ax, and it has a flat surface for pounding wedges. I guess that's what we used it for anyway.

[01:15:52] And for a full hour, we would cut wood and split wood. And then we would move on to [coal?] [01:16:06] line, which was just digging fireline up through the forest with no fire on either side of it and so we called it [unclear] [01:16:20] line. And that was so that we learned the technique. A squad of eight with pulaskis, seven pulaskis and a shovel at the end and the shovel was a cleanup man. He would, anything that we had missed in the way of leaving fuel in the fireline, why he'd scoot it out.

[01:16:57] And we used the bump system. You worked or digged a fireline until you reach the man ahead of you and you bump him up, you start where he left off and he moved on to the next man, then all the way up the front. And we were able to dig about ten chains of fireline an hour that way.

- [01:17:34] **James Wall:** Wow. You got good at it.
- [01:17:36] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.
- [01:17:37] **James Wall:** That's quick.
- [01:17:38] **Spud DeJarnette:** And then we moved from there. We moved to parachute retrieval, which basically was putting on a pair of tree spurs and the tree spur had a three-inch hook, so you could get it through the bark on a old yellow pine tree that had about three inches of bark on it. And that way you could get into the wood of the tree with a spike.
- [01:18:17] **James Wall:** And so, you just climb up the tree like a cat to get your parachute back, huh?
- [01:18:23] **Spud DeJarnette:** And yeah, learning to climb trees. And sometimes you'd got to, if you were unlucky and draped your shoot over the top of one of yellow pine trees, you could be up there 150 feet. [Laughs]
- [01:18:42] **James Wall:** So, they started you at the ground and then worked your way up. And then I guess at some point they said, all right, now it's time to learn how to fall out of a plane.
- [01:18:53] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, well, usually it was when we reached the limbs of the tree, and we would climb up ways above that using the limbs instead of the spurs. And then we would come back down to where we needed the spurs to get back down to the ground level. I never had that—I never had the bad luck to hang myself in a yellow pine tree. I've hung myself over several fir trees. But you can start from ground level on a fir, generally speaking, or you wouldn't need more than a—for ten or fifteen of spurs, well then you can climb the tree. I, yeah, I did.
- [01:20:00] And I hung an ax on a line that was attached to my climbing belt, and that was dropping was down below me. And I would climb up to the point where I could get under the canopy and chop the top of the tree out, and then fold it over and then my chute would then go down to the ground with the treetop, and I would come back down and then untangle everything. And I did that several times, and that actually, it's called a feather bed landing. Your feet don't touch the ground, and you've got the supple spring action of the tree would just gently bend itself over until you came to a stop, and you were hanging there.



**[01:21:23]** And then you went into your let down procedure, which was we had a hundred-foot, half-inch line in a pocket on our leg, and it was in a coil, and the coil was ended with a whole series of overhand loops. And you take that out and you thread that up through your let down belt up to the riser of the parachute, and you'd tie it into the riser of the parachute using three overhand knots. And the third knot was a safety knot. [laughs] Anyway, we would make sure that you're not tying your harness because of you're going to let yourself out of your harness. And if you were tied into your harness, it was a long drop down, [laughs] so you wanted to make sure you were tied into that parachute, which was anchored to the tree. And then you used to let down procedure using a loop around your foot for friction, and it worked beautifully. You'd sit there with a line running through your gloved hand and gently, slowly glide down out of the tree until you touch the ground. Then you got out of all of that rigging. And the next thing was to rescue the parachute.

**[01:23:44]** **James Wall:** Because that parachute's worth more than you are, right?

**[01:23:48]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, that's right.

**[01:23:51]** **James Wall:** One smokejumper told me, if you didn't come back with your parachute, then you might as well just not come back.

**[01:23:55]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Oh, yeah. Right. And we had a special sack for the parachute and the harness and the rigging, and then we had another flour sack for our gear, all of our tools and so forth.

**[01:24:21]** **James Wall:** What do you remember about your first jump? Do you remember the first time you started jumping?

**[01:24:26]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, I missed a spot by about, oh, thirty feet, and that was my first hang-up. I was hung up about fifteen feet above the ground. My feet were about fifteen feet up, and I put my let down procedure to good use on that one. And I got down and walked over to the spot. As I say, it was about thirty feet, and this was a pasture, and there was a line of trees about thirty or about maybe ten feet wide. I mean, no, not the line of trees, but the spot was about ten feet wide. And then there was this line of trees, and I lit in the line of trees at the right on edge of them. And yes, it was a soft landing, very soft. And in fact, in a lot of fire jumps later, I deliberately picked out a group of small trees. They're usually fir trees and second and

third growth and tried to hang up in that small group of trees. And then I would have my feet, maybe five feet above the ground, not very much. And those trees would just let me catch the chute and drop it like this, and slowly little bounce, not much. And yeah, it was good.

**[01:26:54]** I never really understood whether the Forest Service frowned on that or not. I think they just took it as a matter of course. But I never talked about the fact that I was deliberately choosing to do that.

**[01:27:25]** **James Wall:** That sounds like you made it out all right.

**[01:27:30]** **Spud DeJarnette:** And those trees were big enough so that, or small enough so that I could take my pulaski and chop about two or three of them and bring my chute down, and I would sacrifice three young fir trees, usually fir—the pine trees didn't cluster like that very much. They usually were, the saplings were spread apart. And a yellow pine tree, a big one, avoided at all costs, because if you hung your chute on a branch on a yellow pine tree, that branch would bend down until your chute slid off. And I've known guys that have come down fifty feet, and one of them was very lucky, was really lucky.

**[01:29:06]** He was coming down headfirst off of this pine tree. It was our graduation jump, by the way. And he—into a big pile of brush that was growing alder and maple growing out to the base of this tree. And he hit that headfirst and it stopped him. And he was upside down, cursing his head off, [laughs] and he finally wriggled around and got upright and walked out of that pile of brush.

**[01:30:07]** **James Wall:** Wow.

**[01:30:11]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, he wasn't hurt, scratched up a little bit, but not even that, because you don't get scratched up in that jumpsuit.

**[01:30:20]** **James Wall:** Oh yeah. You're like an astronaut almost.

**[01:30:23]** **Spud DeJarnette:** It would shed, the pants were outside of the jacket so that it formed the surface that went right straight up and over your head without touching you. Yeah, that was the son of one of the foresters.

**[01:31:00]** **James Wall:** I'm sure his dad heard about that.

[01:31:02] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. His name was Jim Tripp.

[01:31:07] **James Wall:** So, were you in the same training class with any of the Mann Gulch boys?

[01:31:15] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.

[01:31:17] **James Wall:** What do you remember about them?

[01:31:20] **Spud DeJarnette:** Well, I only had one that I was [audio cut out]. I didn't have, they were older than I was.

[01:31:42] **James Wall:** So how many people were in your training class?

[01:31:44] **Spud DeJarnette:** Fifty.

[01:31:46] **James Wall:** Fifty?

[01:31:47] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.

[01:31:49] **James Wall:** And so, you started in 1949, is that right?

[01:31:52] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah.

[01:31:53] **James Wall:** And that was the year of Mann Gulch, right?

[01:31:55] **Spud DeJarnette:** Right.

[01:31:57] **James Wall:** So how long from the time were you still in training when it happened? Or were you already jumping?

[01:32:03] **Spud DeJarnette:** No, we were already jumping. I had my first fire, and it was kind of a funny one. It was up in Rock Creek, which is about twenty miles east of Missoula.

[01:32:25] **James Wall:** Yeah, big fishing hole. Fishing river.

[01:32:33] **Spud DeJarnette:** And yeah, it was some of the sloughs in the Clark Fork where there were some really nice German brown trouts. And I remember that several of my professors at the university were avid fly fishermen, and they would fish those sloughs for the Germans. Myself, I preferred some of

the other areas where were still cutthroat and Yellowstone cutthroat to be specific. And that's where I did my fishing up in the Sun River and some of that area over on the east side of the Continental Divide over on the east front of the Rockies. And we did some camping and fishing on weekends during the fall and fishing season, and during the spring after the snow would be in snowbanks here and there, and passage through the forest along the river was easy going.

**[01:34:40] James Wall:** So, Rock Creek, that was the big fire. Your first fire you were on, was that over by Rock Creek?

**[01:34:46] Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, my first fire was on Rock Creek, and I jumped up, I wanted to miss the big trees as I was coming down, and so I picked the creek. I said, okay, I'm going to go into Rock Creek. And I did, and I was in water about up to my waist, and I realized that my chute was in the water downstream. It was pulling me downstream. So, I snapped out of it and hung onto one riser so I wouldn't lose it all together. And worked my way over to the bank, tied my chute to a branch of a bush that was sticking up out of the water, and it was just kind of going like this in the stream of water.

**[01:36:15]** When I got up on the bank, a fire was above me and I hiked up to the fire. It was maybe a hundred yards and oh gosh, so who was the foreman on that fire? It was one of the foremen that most of the guys considered a crazy, crazy nut [laughs] anyway, but he was very calm and very collected on the fire, and the damn fire was burning in the rockslide, pine needles and small twigs and this and that and the other thing had been falling out of the pine trees around it. And some of it was blazing pretty good, but other parts of it were just had gotten down into crevices and was smoldering. And he assigned me to build a firewall or rock retaining wall at the bottom edge of the fire to catch anything that rolled down. And I got that done.

**[01:38:11]** I built a wall that was probably about that high. Just picking up rocks out of the rockslide and piling them up and up and up until I got a, oh, what I considered to be a wall. And it's got a couple of fair-sized limbs that were rolling down the hill. And then we dug a fireline literally by piling, picking up the rocks and piling them up, and then working our way up, by putting rocks aside until we got down to what the embers that were burning down inside of that cavity, and doggone it, it worked.

[01:39:27] **James Wall:** Sounds like hard work.

[01:39:29] **Spud DeJarnette:** Interestingly, the one name I remember, Manchester, was a foreman and spotter and he spotted us on this flight and the foreman, oh gosh, his name again—hard. Anyway, my last connection with him is I was teaching, his daughter was in the fourth grade, and I was teaching her violin, and he wrote a story for True Magazine, and the title of it was “I Jumped Into Hell.” Yeah, he was a good guy, but a bit crazy. Yeah, anyway, he kept asking the pilot to come down a little lower so he could see the fire better. And the last time, the last pass we made, we heard a crack and the spotter, Manchester, poked his head out the door, looked under the plane, and there were tree limbs in the—caught up in the wheels of the tri motor. [Laughs] And the pilot says, you want to go any lower? [Laughs] Anyway, we got up to dropping altitude and piled out of the Ford two at a time. There were eight of us in the plane.

[01:42:16] I came down and the district of the Lolo Forest, it was the Rock Creek District of the Lolo, and the ranger was a friend of my dad's. And because doing his work, my dad worked with and helped a lot of the district rangers on various projects. And so anyway, we got the fire out. It was early in the morning and came down to the road and were picked up and taken back to the Rock Creek Ranger Station where we sacked out in the dormitory. And about an hour later, the ranger came in and asked for volunteers. There was another fire alongside of the road going up the creek. And one of the guys and I volunteered, and I made big points with that ranger, and he connected it to my dad too.

[01:43:59] But anyway, we went up the road in a pickup and we came to a pine tree that had fire in it, and it was actually burning down into a cavity that was a squirrel's nest. And so, he climbed up there and got situated right next to it. And I went down to the creek and filled my helmet with water, brought the water back up to him, and he began sprinkling it in and about fifteen hat full's of water. We had a drowned fire that was completely out. We dug down in there with our hands and pulled out the squirrel's nest and got back into the station. About five in the morning, people were just starting to wake up and we piled back into bed.

[01:45:22] I'm sorry, I can't remember his name right off-hand, because his son perished in Mann Gulch. And there was a big furor about that—furor over the dad raised a lot of hell. Accused the jumpers of all kinds of miscues and of course, completely unfounded. He was nowhere near Mann Gulch that

day. And he was trying to relate that burn to some of his experience. And I can understand that. But Mann Gulch was, and still is, a horse of another color. It burns, it goes up grass and brush and little trees, burns again and so on. And it has a pattern. So, I think I can't explain it other than the winds tend to be focused every summer in a certain way in that canyon and it allows the fire to jump the canyon.

[01:47:36] **James Wall:** Yeah, a lot of things went wrong.

[01:47:39] **Spud DeJarnette:** Which is what happened.

[01:47:41] **James Wall:** Do you remember when they told the other jumpers, when they told you and the rest of the jumpers about Mann Gulch? Do you remember when you found out about it?

[01:47:52] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, yeah. They didn't do much until the next year. And then the next year they had developed a fire behavior course, and that course for us was six—if I remember, it was one hour a day for six weeks from the time we signed on as second year jumpers. We joined the rookies for that course. They were building the wind tunnel laboratory, and it hadn't been up to, it had wasn't up to speed yet, but they had experimented with a lot of small fires and watched them go uphill and so forth. And they developed a series of lectures to try to tell us what to look out for. And then we started building a monument trail into Mann Gulch across the top of the ridge and through the—I'm sure, I think it was the, well, the trail was here, and the jump spot was up there, and it was all grass.

[01:50:11] **James Wall:** Was it still burnt when you went back to Mann Gulch to build that trail?

[01:50:20] **Spud DeJarnette:** No.

[01:50:20] **James Wall:** Was it still charred?

[01:50:21] **Spud DeJarnette:** No, it was through-burned areas. And anyway, they built that trail across and down to the crosses of the individual jumpers. And my friend, my childhood friend, Eldon E. Diettert, was the highest man in the race back up the mountain. Diettert was at the head of the line, and he was just a few yards away from the escape route that [Walter B.] Rumsey and [Robert W.] Sallee took through the bluff up above into the rockslide

above that. And he was not more than ten—his cross is not more than ten yards away from that. And they hollered to him, Rumsey, or Sallee, excuse me, Sallee told me that they hollered at Eldon, tried to get him to come up, follow him up that escape route, but he just kept going straight up the mountain and the fire caught him. I'm told that the fire didn't kill them by burning them. The fire killed them when they inhaled the first searing drafts above the fire. It may have been just a few yards. But anyway, that searing updraft burned out their lungs and then the fire reached them. And so that's what I understand. I don't know.

[01:53:08] **James Wall:** So, what was Missoula like after that? Everybody seemed probably knew some of these boys and there were probably funerals and the town itself was probably...

[01:53:21] **Spud DeJarnette:** My feeling when I went back-to-back the next day, I was staying with my mom and dad on the Eddy house, and I went back out to the lofts the next day and the place was just like a morgue. Everybody was almost without words. And we lost our sense of invincibility. Up to that point no jumper had ever died on as a result of a fiery, and that was a real shock. But we went on with the job and Rumsey and Sallee came back into camp a couple of days later and they jumped again. They didn't blame the foreman.

[01:54:58] **James Wall:** Wag Dodge.

[01:55:00] **Spud DeJarnette:** Pardon?

[01:55:02] **James Wall:** Wasn't that Wag Dodge? That was his name.

[01:55:05] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. Yeah. They didn't blame him. They didn't blame the spotter. And it was a normal jump. And I'm going to commit heresy here. The one thing I think they could have done that they didn't do was to, after they collected their gear, instead of sitting down up there and having lunch, if they had grabbed their tools and taken off for the river, they would've reached the river before the fire did. And they could've eaten lunch there. That would've delayed them maybe half an hour. But in time, they had forty-five minutes. They took forty-five minutes up there before they started down. By that time the fire behavior had changed, and it came across the ravine and up to the brush in the grass. And they didn't have a chance in hell of outdistancing that fire as it was coming up the hill. And it became apparent that the situation was serious.

**[01:57:10]** And Wag Dodge told them to drop their tools and make for the river, but it was too late at that point. And that's when Wag set his rescue fire and tried to get the crew to get into the fire burn with him. And they would've gotten in there before the fire reached them. And one of the guys who had been a, well, he was a veteran, I don't remember the service. I don't remember whether or not he was one of the paratroopers that we had in our class. Anyway, there were two of them in the crew that got burned. Anyway, so one of them had said to hell with it, I'm getting out of here. And that started the panic up the hill. And they didn't trust Wag Dodge to know what he was doing. And Wag got into that burn that he created and lay down the, dug a hole for his face, put it in the hole so he could collect whatever cool air that might come along. And the fire went over him, and he said that the fire lifted him. He could feel the fire lifting him. And then it was over. Wag got up. He was unhurt.

**[01:59:34]** And he—one of the poignant things, one of the fellows in the fire, I have all of this written down at home, had been burned so badly that apparently the fumes from the fire didn't sear his lungs completely, but the fire burned him so badly that he didn't have any working nerves to hurt. He didn't hurt, but he was fatally burned. And Saltee and Rumsey sat him on a rock, told him to stay there, they'd get him some water. And apparently by the time they got back to him, he was delirious, and they got the first stretchers, they got him on a stretcher and got him into the hospital in Helena where apparently the fluids in his body just flooded his lungs. And that was it. He died that night, but he didn't hurt.

**[02:02:00]** **James Wall:** So, what did your folks think about you continuing to jump after Mann Gulch? What did your parents think about it?

**[02:02:05]** **Spud DeJarnette:** Well, my dad was appointed to safety as safety officer on Mann Gulch fire. So, he was on the fire, and he knew the extent of the damage that was done. And he didn't think anything at all about my going, staying with the jumpers. He had a sort of a fatalistic attitude.

**[02:02:49]** **James Wall:** What about your mother? Your mother, was she the same way?

**[02:02:53]** **Spud DeJarnette:** No, she didn't. Oh God, I never, well, I'll just say I never heard a negative word from my mom and dad. And my dad wrote the safety report for that fire. He was a head of the committee sent to



investigate and they went through, really through it. And Wag Dodge never received one ounce of criticism. What killed him came from inside. He never lived it down. He went back up in a plane for another jump after that and couldn't jump. So, they transferred him to a district ranger, and he wound up in the ranger station at the foot of Lolo Pass on the [unclear] [02:04:27] south side. And that's where he finished his very few years. He didn't last more than three or four years after that and then he died. I think it was cancer, but it was all also the turmoil inside his system.

[02:05:08] **James Wall:** Yeah, tough to live that down.

[02:05:11] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. That was a tough one.

[02:05:16] **James Wall:** But they learned from it at least. They came up with the ten standard firefighting orders and educated everybody about it and all that. So, what was the rest of your smokejumping career was it compared to that year? Must have been, well, a little bit more quiet.

[02:05:35] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. They were a group of veteran jumpers that were just selected off the jump list, and they went in and all they could do was when they located one of the burned jumpers, they put him in a body sack, loaded him on the stretcher and sent him off for the mortuary. And that was the extent of the rescue. But they actually found all of them and they were in a line from the one who was slowest to the one that was fastest, and Eldon was fastest. I know. I put a wreath on his cross in 1999, fifty years later, and the Forest Service did a fifty-year memorial. And I got lucky—I got selected because Eldon was a childhood with a friend, and I trained with him, and I knew him, and his dad was my zoology prof at the university in my freshman year. So, I felt perfectly natural, but I got up there to his cross and I was trembling so hard. [tearing up] I had to have help getting the wreath up attached the way they wanted it attached to the monument.

[02:08:31] And then my carefully prepared speech went out the window and I stood looking at the reporters and assembled jumpers and I couldn't think of a thing to say. Finally, a reporter said, "Well, what was it like after in the jump center, the day after?" And I just said, "It was like a morgue."

[02:09:10] **James Wall:** Did you ever see Eldon's parents after that? Around town?

**[02:09:17] Spud DeJarnette:** Everybody went about their business, their work, but very quietly. There was none of the hijinks or ribald humor that day. All of the guys that were on the high enough on the jump list to hope for another fire and over time, were very quiet. But I didn't jump. I jumped about three weeks later and then I jumped three fires, one right after another. And I didn't think at all. I was always focused on the present problem. And the past was not in my mind. I wasn't thinking of Mann Gulch. I didn't think about Mann Gulch until I was off of a fire and back at the base waiting for another fire. Then I had thoughts. My thoughts were basically private and not relevant because I didn't have any sense of relevancy to Mann Gulch, and I didn't have it until fifty years later.

**[02:11:34]** And the only thing I could think of standing there at Eldon's cross was, "Well, Eldon, now I know." And I remember we were coming down the rockslide into the ravine and let's see—fifty years—yeah, I was in my seventies and I, a lady reporter started to follow me, and I said, "Ma'am, I don't know how good I can make it along these rocks. I'm not twenty anymore." [laughs] But as I got going the old way of just hopping from rock to this rock and selecting another rock and hopping and going down, I was going faster than I realized. And I got down in the car that was transporting us, and she walked up and tapped on my window, and I rolled down my window and she says, "You old goat!" [laughs] So that was a pretty good end to that saga.

**[02:13:46]** No, the only thing I knew about Mann Gulch was my friend Dick Strong. He was at home in Hamilton, and he grabbed a copy of the Missoulian that had a fire that or had a story that focused on the fire. And there was a lot of half-truths in that article too, because they didn't know they had not been in the fire. And so, they were a lot of speculation.

**[02:14:31]** And the funny thing that Dick and I spent—wasted a lot of time trying to find the jump list for that date, August 6, 1949. And finally, somebody with some knowledge said, "Well, that jump list is probably languishing in the dusty bins of some courthouse some place, and it has never surfaced." And that would've put my position on the jump list in relation to the Mann Gulch fire in perspective because I was three or four jumpers ahead of that crew. I would like to be able to say, "Okay, this was the jump list of that day, and this puts a certainty," but everything related to that, I've been through the bowels of the Jump Depot and they have everything except that day. And so, some lawyer pursuing one of the lawsuits that followed that fire, pulled that jump list and it went into oblivion.

- [02:16:57] **James Wall:** Well, maybe it's better not knowing.
- [02:17:00] **Spud DeJarnette:** Maybe so. I ceased to worry about it a long time ago.
- [02:17:08] **James Wall:** Yeah. Well, you've got some hell of a stories. I said, you've got some crazy stories. I can't believe all I'm hearing.
- [02:17:17] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah. Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it.
- [02:17:25] **James Wall:** Well, it's an amazing one.
- [02:17:29] **Linda DeJarnette's Daughter:** One, I have to say one thing. So my dad has always, well, besides being my hero, he's very stoic.
- [02:17:38] **Spud DeJarnette:** Yeah, her granddad went on the fire as a safety officer the next day.
- [02:17:47] **Spud DeJarnette's Daughter:** I didn't know that either. I'm learning stuff.
- [02:17:49] **Spud DeJarnette:** And learned very quickly, learned the horrible result of the fire. And he spent some time with a committee of foresters examining that day from the first fire call from Mann Gulch into the Jump Depot. And they asked, at first they only wanted eight men, and I've forgotten how it came about that it was a sixteen man crew, and so they needed the 'Dug' as a jump plane and otherwise from what I remember, the reason they didn't have a tri motor that could take eight was because we were coming back from this dry run that I was on, and we were coming into Hale Field as the 'Dug' was loading for Mann Gulch. And so that's how I crossed paths with the Mann Gulch crew. I've always admired Eldon, his long legs took him farther up that mountain ahead of the fire than anybody else. If he had just turned and gone with Rumsey and Sallee, he'd be alive today. If he was well, he would be, well, one year younger than I am.
- [02:20:36] **James Wall:** Yeah. Well, I don't think anybody could have done any better. It's just a crazy story.
- [02:20:46] **Spud DeJarnette:** When at the end of the day in 1999 when we put those wreaths on the cross, I was down at the festivities that evening. The speeches were made, and I was standing there in the dark and I felt a friendly hand on my shoulder, and it was Eldon's oldest brother. He had

come over to me and put a friendly hand on my shoulder, and I will never forget that. [tears up] He looked at me and he smiled, and he said, "Thanks. Thank you Spud."

**[02:22:01] James Wall:** I bet that felt good to get Yeah. That kind of closure. What a story.

**[02:22:04] Spud DeJarnette:** I only talked, I only talked to Sallee once in succeeding years. He and I were together at a reunion in Missoula, and he said, he says, "Spud, it wasn't Wag's fault." And he described the brief ordeal in the rockslide while he and Rumsey scrambled to avoid the fire as it came around the rock slide. Other than that, he never—he gave one interview to [Carl Gilliland?] [02:23:25], who was a fellow jumper and a news guy. He had spent his career as a public service officer in the Forest Service, and he gave an interview with Sallee. Rumsey had already died of cancer. He died of cancer shortly, within a few years of the fire and he never did talk about the fire. And it took Sallee a long time. It took him years to talk about it. He was a nice guy. He finally passed away a few years ago of something I can't remember exactly what it was. Anyway, I can't think of anything else related to the Mann Gulch.

**[02:25:00] James Wall:** I think you said enough. I learned quite a bit today. And I think we'll let you get off the clock now and go get something to eat.

**[End of Interview]**