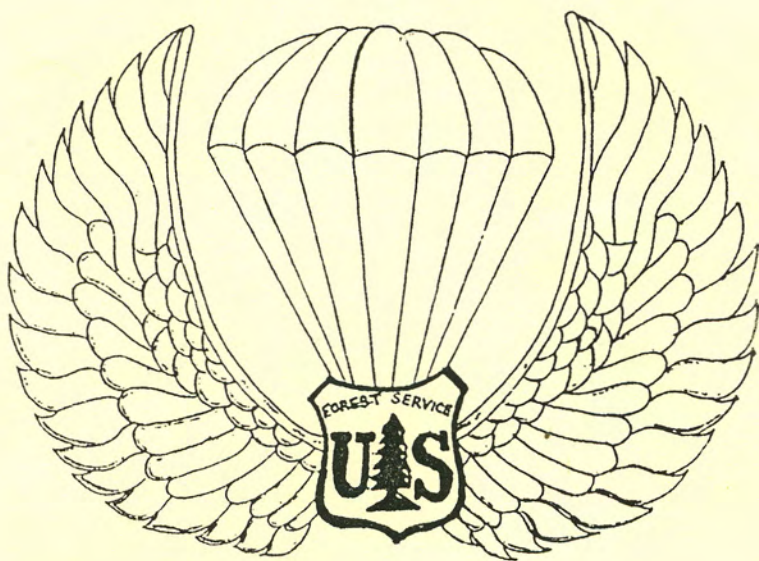


MEMORIAL

A TRIBUTE TO
FOREST SERVICE EMPLOYEES
WHO PERISHED AT
MOOSE CREEK
AUGUST 4, 1959



TRI-MOTOR CRASH - AUGUST 1959

On August 4, 1959 a Johnson Flying Service Ford tri-motor plane crashed into some helicopter gasoline barrels while landing at the Moose Creek airstrip in Idaho and caused the death of two smoke-jumpers and burned the pilot and two other passengers. Both jumpers were assigned to Grangeville, Idaho. Gary G. Williams 23, West Valley, New York was killed at the scene. John A. Rolf, 23, Buchanan, New York, died at the General Hospital in Grangeville, Idaho, where he was flown.

Alva W. Blackerby of Grangeville, Supervisor of the Nez Perce National Forest also perished. Roland M. Stoleson of Grangeville, smoke jumber foreman suffered minor burns. The pilot, Herbert Culver received multiple burns.

The men boarded the plane at Grangeville on a smoke-jumping mission. They were to have put down at Moose Creek to get the location of their target. The plane also was carrying supplies. A tricky wind prevented the plane from touching down on the first attempt. On the next try the plane got on the runway, was shoved ahead by the wind to the end of the strip, then the tail flipped around so that the plane veered off to the side and plowed into the gasoline barrels, causing the explosion.

A physician from Grangeville and a first aid team from the Aerial Fire Depot at Missoula were rushed to Moose Creek by plane directly after the crash.

A Forest Service Region 1 Serious Accident Committee composed of Fred J. Heinrich, regional safety officer; Herbert K. Harris, and L. M. Stewart flew to Moose Creek to investigate the crash.

A memorial to the crash victims was placed on a rock in front of the Moose Creek Ranger Station office and is commemorated today, September 8, 1989---- 30 years after the crash.

DC-3 CRASH - JUNE 11, 1979

On June 11, 1979, at approximately 9:50 a.m. PDT, a Forest Service DC-3 (148Z) aircraft crashed in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of Northeast Idaho. The pilot checked in by radio just after the plane was airborne while leaving Grangeville, Idaho, but did not make further radio contact after takeoff. Normal flight following procedure required another radio check-in at approximately the time of the crash. The plane went down in the Selway

river approximately 10 miles downriver from the Moose Creek Ranger Station on the Nez Perce National Forest. Twelve persons were on board, including the pilot, copilot, 9 other Forest Service employees, and one volunteer. Three initially survived the crash, but one died of injuries at the scene before he could be transported to the hospital. He received emergency medical attention at the scene. Nine bodies were recovered by June 17. The last body (the pilot) was recovered on July 14.

When the Nezperce National Forest Dispatch Office could not contact the DC-3 and it was determined to be late for its arrival at Moose Creek, a search plane was dispatched from Grangeville at 10:30 a.m. to look for it. This search aircraft picked up the Emergency Locator Transmitter signal emanating from the crashed DC-3. A second fixed-wing aircraft and a helicopter were then sent from Grangeville to assist in the search, and the plane was visually located at approximately Noon PDT.

While the search was in progress, a DC-3 with 14 rescue-trained smokejumpers was sent from the Region 1 Aerial Fire Depot at Missoula, Montana. The group included seven certified EMT's. Two jumped at the crash site soon after it was located, and the other 12 jumped after they received an assessment of conditions in the jump area from the first two.

The DC-3 which crashed was dispatched from Grangeville to transport 10 passengers to Moose Creek Ranger Station, a distance of about 60 miles. There was one Forest Service volunteer on board and three permanent Forest Service employees. There were also six temporary employees. The temporary employees were enroute to Moose Creek for training so that they could provide guidance and direction to wilderness users. Two of the permanent employees were enroute to check the water system for the Ranger Station.

The plane was seen to experience engine trouble a few miles before the crash. Several visitors who were rafting and packing in the wilderness area observed the plane as it proceeded on its flight path up the Selway River. At least three people took photos of it during the interval, from the time the vapor trailed from the right engine until it was approaching the impact point, and the film was turned over to the Forest Service. From those accounts and from photographs, it is known that the right engine burned and fell off the wing about three miles before impact. Immediately before the crash, the plane hit a tree.

Search and rescue efforts continued until the Forest Service accounted for all victims. The efforts were hampered by limited helicopter landing sites to bring equipment to the area, and by the high water level, rapid flow, and very cold temperatures of the Selway River. Assistance from other organizations was requested to retrieve the large portions of the plane wreckage which were under hydraulic pressure from the strong current.

A memorial to the crash victims is in place on a rock in front of the Moose Creek Ranger Station office.

ATTENDEES

Fred Brauer

George Cross

Ron Stoleson

Maureen Stoleson

Beth Horn, Regional Office

Jim Hagemeyer, Regional Office

Dave Poncin, Nez Perce National Forest

Dennis Dailey, Moose Creek Ranger District

Mark Woods, Moose Creek Ranger District

Julie Hauger, Moose Creek Ranger District