

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Board Members, Technical Advisors and Witnesses_____	1
Preliminary Discussion, September 26, 8 to 9 a.m._____	3
Board Objectives and Purposes_____	8
Testimony of:	
Ranger Jansson, on Events of About 2 p.m., August 5_____	10
Supervisor Moir, on Events to About 2 p.m., August 5_____	23
Regional Dispatchers Fred Fite and Ralph Hand_____	26
Ranger Jansson, on Events from 2 p.m. to 9 a.m., August 5_____	33
Supervisor Moir, on Events from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., August 5_____	48
Assistant Supervisor Eaton on His Aerial Patrol_____	52
Spotter Cooley_____	58
Smokejumper Sallee_____	69
Pilot Kenneth Huber_____	90
Photographer Elmer Bloom_____	94
Smokejumper Hersey_____	97
Smokejumper - Administrator Stillings_____	110
Smokejumper Foreman Dodge_____	117
Ranger Janssen on Rescue Operations_____	126
Supervisor Moir on Rescue Operations_____	135
Regional Forester Hanson_____	144
Regional Personnel Officer McLaughlin_____	153
Regional Fiscal Agent Besman_____	162
Regional Safety Officer Blake_____	164
Assistant Regional Chief of Fire Control Space_____	167
Washington Office Safety Officer Jackson_____	170
Recommendations by Supervisor Moir_____	173
Statement by Smokejumper Foreman Lufkin_____	178
Statement by Washington Office Chief of Fire Control Gustafson_____	179
Testimony of Henry J. Thol (Father of One of the Victims)_____	183

**BOARD OF REVIEW**  
**of**  
**Mann Gulch Fire, Helena National Forest, August 5, 1949**  
**held in**  
**Missoula, Montana, September 26 - 28, 1949**

**Membership of the Board of Review**

C. M. Granger, Assistant Chief, Forest Service, In Charge of National Forest Administration - Chairman

H. D. Cochran, Chief, Division of Personnel Management, Office of the Chief, Forest Service

Jay H. Price, Regional Forester, North Central Region

Lawrence K. Mays, Assistant Regional Forester, in Charge, Division of Operation, Pacific Northwest Region

J. Malcolm Loring, Forest Supervisor, Chelan National Forest, Pacific Northwest Region

**Technical Advisors**

G. A. Gustafson, Chief, Division of Fire Control, Office of the Chief, Forest Service

Francis Lufkin, Smokejumper Foreman, Chelan National Forest, Pacific Northwest Region (Advisory Smokejumper Foreman)

**Witnesses**

J. Robert Janssen, District Ranger, Canyon Ferry District, Helena National Forest, Northern Region

Arthur D. Moir, Jr. Forest Supervisor, Helena National Forest, Northern Region

Frederick M. Fite, Regional Fire Dispatcher, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Ralph L. Hand, in Charge of Fire Planning, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Harve L. Eaton, Assistant Forest Supervisor, Helena National Forest, Northern Region

Earl E. Cooley, Parachute Project Administrative Assistant (Fire Technician), Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Elmer P. Bloom, Photographer (Motion Picture), Division of Information & Education, Northern Region

Kenneth Huber, Pilot, Johnson Flying Service (Government contractor), Missoula Montana

Robert W. Sallee, Smokejumper-Fireman, Parachute Project, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Walter B. Ramsey, Smokejumper-Fireman, Parachute Project, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

E. Wagner Dodge, Foreman of Parachute Squads, Parachute Project, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Sidney E. McLaughlin, Regional Personnel Officer, Division of Personnel Management, Northern Region

Fred L. Stillings, Parachute Project Administrative Officer, Division of Fire Central, Northern Region

Clyde D. Blake, Assistant Regional Training and Safety Officer, Division of Personnel Management, Northern Region

Seth Jackson, Safety Officer, Division of Personnel Management, Chief's Office

Ralph S. Space, Assistant Chief, Division of Fire Control, Northern Region

Percy D. Hanson, Regional Forester, Northern Region

LaVaughn Boaman, Regional Fiscal Agent, Northern Region

**PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION**  
**Monday, September 26, 8 to 9 a.m.**

Present were Granger, Cochran, Price, Gustafson, Loring, Hanson, Lufkin, Mays, Crocker and Space.

GUSTAFSON: The first thing to settle is whether the members of the Board deem it necessary to go into the area on foot. We planned to start the meeting this morning and then fly over the area, but there was some talk at the hotel last night that it might be desirable to go in on foot. I think we should throw it open to question and make a decision now and make plans for cars and a boat to get from Helena to the area. What is your pleasure?

GRANGER: The procedure that is proposed in the memo that went around to everyone was developed by Gus because I have had no experience with this sort of thing. If there is any question about the general procedure laid out here or if you think we ought to vary it in any important degree, I am sure Gus will agree that it is open for discussion.

My brief review of the reports on the fire have made me think that there are two principal points upon which we need to satisfy ourselves with respect to the tragedy. One is whether or not it could have been expected that the man in charge of the crew would have recognized the possibility or probability of the fire getting in behind them and gotten his crew out before they were shut off at the lower end; and the second is when it became apparent to Dodge that the only possible means of escape was getting into the area of the escape fire that he set - whether at that time he took adequate measures to encourage the other members of the crew to follow his instructions. There may be other equally important points that I have not become aware of because of my scanty picture of the whole occurrence.

We ought to keep in mind the most significant points and direct our questions to the witnesses in the light of those. We should avoid hearing witnesses or asking witnesses questions which don't point to the essential things we need to find out. Gus, I gather that you also want to find out whether the fire was properly handled as a fire, apart from the tragedy.

GUSTAFSON: Up to the time of the accident.

GRANGER: We also should decide whether we need to go into the area on the ground. Perhaps we will be able to form a better opinion after seeing the area from the air. There is the fact that the father of one of the men is very critical and might be expecting us to come in there as a Board of Review. We might make a brief excursion in there for the sake of seeing him if for no other reason, or give him an opportunity to come in and make a presentation of his case before the Board. We should make a determination with those things in view. Open for suggestions or comments.

HANSON: I thing this Board ought to try to picture the conditions that existed when the men were making up their minds to jump, as under those conditions the Board can decide as to whether the jump should have been made or not. I think it is very important for the Board to search out the conditions that existed at the time the jump was about to be made and see if they can determine, as firefighters, whether under those conditions, this jump should not have been made.

The second point in regard to going to the area, if that man is there (and I don't know whether he is or not, he was 3 days ago) conceivably he could make a statement right there to the Board on the ground. It might be unnecessary for him to come in here. I would like him to have an opportunity to come in here and tell his story before the Board if he doesn't do it out there. I don't think you will gain by it as a Board, but I would appreciate going through the motion.

MAYS: I don't think in face of the seriousness of this thing and having gone to the expense of having the Board of Review, that we should do it half way. An aerial look smooths the ground out too much. I am of the opinion that we ought to look at it on the ground. How long would it take?

HANSON: It would take all of today.

SPACE: A hard day.

LORING: Fly over it and then go in on the ground.

MAYS: We don't want to come back and then have to do it over again. I didn't know until last night about the father of this boy. I think we should do a thorough job.

HANSON: We will take Dodge with us and he will tell his story on the ground. The whole area will be more easily visualized when you consider the action later. If you would like to, we can make arrangements for the trip.

COCHRAN: What would you do, visit Meriwether camp?

HANSON: We would fly the fire area first. Arrangements will be made for cars at Helena and a boat to take us down the river.

GRANGER: It seems to be the consensus that we should go into the area on the ground.

GUSTAFSON: Will some one make arrangements for that.

HANSON: We will leave here at 9:30 a.m.

GUSTAFSON: We'd best go out and dress for the trip. (To Hanson) Have arrangements made for cars to meet us at 12:30 p.m. at Helena and arrange for the boat, and also get Dodge. (Instructions given to Space.)

One thing particularly that we want to keep in mind continuously is the matter of taking an objective view of this whole thing. We must view it in the light of decisions made at the time. It is difficult to foretell the future. It is going to be difficult not to take the tragedy as the substance. We must determine what conditions were when they were planning on jumping; what were the conditions when Dodge was going down the gulch. We will have to judge the different steps as we go along. That is why some of the public might be critical. They may take the fact that the tragedy did occur as proof that everything was dangerous.

HANSON: You want to determine fire action up to the time of the tragedy? We are not laboring under instructions to have a Board of Review of the entire fire action? As of now we have not been planning a review covering anything more than fire up to the time of the tragedy.

GUSTAFSON: The questions I prepared were to ferret out fire action up to that point and such action as is necessary to obtain all the facts.

COCHRAN: I understand we are to follow the handling of the tragedy regardless of the fire.

HANSON: We had two or three days' fire action following the tragedy as to rescue action.

COCHRAN: I understand we are to handle the action following the tragedy as to rescue action.

HANSON: The fire was taken over by Clayton and put out.

GUSTAFSON: Regarding the procedure to be followed, this is just a procedure that I thought up. It may not be the one we want. There might be better ones, and I am open to suggestion on that. Anything to make the Board run smoothly. Would like your recommendations and conclusions. The reason these questions were written down is because I am intimately acquainted with the fire area. In following this thing through, the questions merely attempt to bring before the Board brief, pertinent facts which will make it possible to ask questions to bring out points that may not be clear to members of the Board. It would be hard for the Board to start out cold and question witnesses without a fairly complete background. We may not have to ask all of them, but the fact is that they do have a certain bearing on the subject. You may notice that we are asking similar questions of different people. Some men are forgetful and some men see things differently than others. We want to tie facts down to the ground. If a man says he was at a certain place at 5 o'clock, I want someone to also back that up. If a man saw a fire from an airplane, I would like to have other people who saw

that fire tell what they saw. Try to nail down facts as we go along; if various individuals say the same thing, it more or less cinches that fact.

PRICE: I was wondering what sort of background the Board might get on the general weather conditions, as to the probability of such a blow-up.

GUSTAFSON: Through these questions we will have a definite background as to weather conditions three days previous to the time, wind velocities, fire dangers, etc.

CROCKER: We have that broken down into individual components so these men can make their own interpretations.

GUSTAFSON: I thought flying over the area and later going into it on foot and then discussing it, you will have a pretty good basis for questions. When we talk about the dropping area you will see it as we left it. You will see the spot where things were piled up in normal fashion indicating they were not worried on the ground at the time.

GRANGER: Are there any recommendations for important changes in the procedure?

COCHRAN: Would it be desirable to set up the basic questions that we are all primarily interested in and get a composite set of objectives for the inquiry or do you think we want to use these questions prepared by Gustafson and make up our objectives as we go along? Perhaps it is desirable to pool the questions that may occur to us without having them lined out in advance.

GRANGER: Pete asked us to consider whether the jump should have been made at all. That is one major point. The second is, when the jump was made, should the foreman have foreseen the danger and taken his crew direct to the river? The third is, when they got trapped did the foreman use all possible effort to get the men to follow his lead and get them into the escape-fire area? We ought to direct our examination at a defined objective.

COCHRAN: Communication failures ought to be explored.

MAYS: They will be brought out by questions Gustafson has lined up.

GUSTAFSON: We should cover pre-suppression at the forest level; also organization and training has a bearing on the whole thing. The statements will bring them out. The question, whether or not the jump should have been made is a germane question. Others also can be made, such as whether or not the foreman evidenced real leadership in getting the men to come into this fire he had set; whether under information available to the foreman he could have been expected to know the danger of the fire.

HANSON: It is a big subject -- predicting fire behavior. Certainly we didn't predict the fire behavior that occurred. There may be something there from a research standpoint -- something that might be a by-product of this meeting.

PRICE: Seemingly those judgments have to be formed on a belief as to the probabilities. (To Hanson) You remember the Mill Creek fire, it was truly a local weather condition that resulted in the blow-up, not predictable from general weather observations.

HANSON: As long as we fight fires, we are going to be faced with conditions like this. We want to do all we can in trying to predict them.

GRANGER: Let's focus on whether our general procedure is okay.

MAYS: I would like to accept our general procedure as is. I think these questions are complete and detailed enough to bring out every important point, especially as the Board members can bring out any additional information they may feel necessary.

GUSTAFSON: You will see there was an attempt made to take Jansson's story up to the time that the smokejumpers were ordered and not beyond that point. When the Board questions Jansson, take him only up to that time. He will come in again later. I am attempting to get a chronological picture from the time the fire occurred until the tragedy occurred, a step-by-step picture so when the review is complete, the Board will have a clear-cut chronological picture from these questions.

HANSON: May we have a list of who is to go on this trip today?

GUSTAFSON: Hanson, Crocker, Dodge, Cooley and members of the Board, including Lufkin. I do not think it is necessary for me to go in.

HANSON: With that group you have no representative from the forest. Would you like Jansson to go along?

GUSTAFSON: Yes, particularly important.

COCHRAN: (To Gustafson) I think you should be there. (General agreement.)

HANSON: What do you want to do about lunch, have it at Helena.

GRANGER: Get lunches put up at Helena and eat them on the boat.

After some discussion about suitable clothing for the trip, the meeting adjourned.

**BOARD OBJECTIVES ARE PURPOSED**

Mr. Gustafson opened the meeting Tuesday morning, September 27, by reading a list of those persons who are to sit in all the time:

Granger	Lufkin	Moir
Cochran	Hanson	Jansson
Price	Crocker	Jackson
Mays	Blake	
Loring	McLaughlin	

Mr. Gustafson then asked Mr. Granger to make a few statements regarding this Board meeting, telling of the objectives, purposes, etc.

GRANGER: The objective of the meeting is to determine the essential facts relating to the tragedy to see whether there were any things done or left undone which a reasonable man might expect to have been done, or to have been avoided, that would bear on the tragedy which resulted in the deaths of the men. This is no sense an inquisition or trial, but rather an objective examination of the facts, with a view to profiting by this experience in dealing with situations of this kind in the future. But, I feel that we also have the responsibility toward our own personnel and toward the families of those who lost their lives, to make as certain as is reasonably possible whether there were important errors of omission or commission which had an important bearing on what happened. So, we want everyone to answer all questions fully and freely in the knowledge that this is an objective search for information.

I would like to put in the record the fact that yesterday the Board flew over the Mann Gulch area and then proceeded into the area on foot, and went to a point near where the jumpers landed, from which we could easily see the conditions under which they landed. We had a statement from Dodge, the foreman of the jumper crew, covering all the events that took place at the time he and his crew were in the area. We visited all the key points in the area, covering much the same ground that the crew did in their journey toward the foot of the Gulch and back toward the ridge in their efforts to escape this fire, so that it is felt that the Board has a first-rate picture of the physical layout and of the principal actions as related by Foreman Dodge, and as supplemented briefly by Ranger Jansson as to the conditions which he faced when he sought to enter the area from the river.

Now let us keep in mind that everything that is being said here will be taken down and transcribed, and endeavor to avoid speaking too rapidly, and at the same time speak clearly so that the person taking the record will have no difficulty in getting it fully and accurately.

GUSTAFSON: I would like to add a few words before we get into the heart of this hearing. We agreed yesterday how this meeting would proceed and that I would attempt to ask the various witnesses very short, brief questions, which questions may be answered very briefly and to the point. Upon completion of these particular questions, the Board members would then be afforded an

opportunity to ask such other questions as they deem necessary to bring out questions not clear to them or to bring out facts that the witnesses have not fully covered. I think we will have to repeat this to everyone of the witnesses with the request that if a brief question is asked and it can be answered in one word (for instance, "What time did the fire start?" - if it is known that it started at 5:50 p.m.) that would be the answer. I think at this time we are ready for the witnesses, with the exception of one additional point - that certain witnesses will appear several times for the reason that we will want to try to build up for the benefit of the Board members the record in a chronological manner.

**TESTIMONY OF RANGER JANSSON**  
**On Events to about 2 p.m., August 5**

GUSTAFSON: The questions that are going to be asked of you will lead up to the time smokejumpers were ordered, and you will be asked to return to be questioned further. I would like to have your full name.

JANSSON: John Robert Jansson.

GUSTAFSON: What is your title and grade?

JANSSON: Forester, P-3.

GUSTAFSON: May we have a brief statement from you regarding your experience in fire control?

JANSSON: My first season in fire control work was in 1935, and I have worked continuously every fire season since then in the Forest Service.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your experience in relation to fire suppression activities, particularly as it involves both small and large fires?

JANSSON: I have been involved in control of over 100 fires. I have been fire boss on one project fire and also one fire that was not a project fire, but was a large fire, previous to the Mann Gulch fire. I have been fire boss on numerous Class C fires.

GUSTAFSON: Now, getting to the particular fire in question; developing some events up to it. When did the lightning storm occur on your district which resulted in this fire?

JANSSON: About 4:00 p.m., August 4.

GUSTAFSON: How serious was this lightning storm?

JANSSON: I would say it was about average. We had quite a lot of rain in certain areas accompanying this storm.

GUSTAFSON: How many fires resulted from it on your district?

JANSSON: Five.

GUSTAFSON: Was intensified detection stepped up in view of this lightning storm?

JANSSON: I have no way of stepping it up. We had everything on the job prior to the storm. We would of course make patrol flights which we do only when we believe there is an opportunity to locate a fire.

GUSTAFSON: How about the pre-suppression strength aside from suppression? Was it stepped up as a result of this storm?

JANSSON: No, our fire danger was not high enough. We were fully manned up to Table X.

GUSTAFSON: You brought in a new term here. For the benefit of the Board, please give them a brief idea of what Table X is.

JANSSON: Table X is the curve which tells us how many positions we are to man at certain fire dangers, and the fire danger that we had at that time allowed us to occupy Hogback Lookout, headquarters smoke-chaser at Canyon Ferry, headquarters guard and the alternate position.

GUSTAFSON: When was Guard Harrison instructed to make this early morning patrol.

JANSSON: 8:15 a.m. on August 5.

GUSTAFSON: Where was his headquarters?

JANSSON: Meriwether Campground.

GUSTAFSON: What were the instructions given him on August 5?

JANSSON: I discussed the situation with him that morning, and from the information he gave me we decided that he would start his patrol at 11 a.m. and report back to Meriwether at 3:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Could Guard Harrison have seen this fire earlier if he had made the patrol earlier in the morning?

JANSSON: I flew over it at about 11:25 a.m. and was unable to see any smoke in the area. It is possible that a man on foot would have been able to see the smoke if he had arrived there a little earlier.

GUSTAFSON: What direction were you going when you entered Mann Gulch?

JANSSON: South. We flew right over the patrol point.

GUSTAFSON: At what time were you over the patrol point, in your estimation?

JANSSON: 11:25 a.m. We then proceeded to fly the rest of the wild area, coming back into the Missouri River bench by way of Trout Creek circling the area several times where the York fire flare-up had been reported the previous night. Could see no sign of smoke. We then flew over the Cave Gulch fire, which was to the south. We already knew about the location of the Cave Gulch fire, but we

had a great deal of difficulty in spotting it because it was throwing very little smoke. We then covered the southern part of the district, doubled back, came over the Cave Gulch fire again to get another look at it. It appeared even more quiet on the second trip. While we did not fly directly over the York fire, we came close enough to look over the area again and proceeded to the Helena airport.

GUSTAFSON: You made one patrol flight over the Mann Gulch patrol point?

JANSSON: Yes, and the other one was about one mile west of the patrol point. (The route traveled by the patrol plane was traced out on the map by Jansson.)

GUSTAFSON: When did you return to Helena from this particular trip?

JANSSON: 12:25 a.m., August 5.

GUSTAFSON: When was the Mann Gulch fire first officially discovered?

JANSSON: I suppose it would be by Harrison. He had already gone up toward his patrol point, and it was then, I think - I don't actually know whether he got up there and tried to work on the fire or whether he had seen it from the trail.

GUSTAFSON: When was the fire first officially discovered, on which action was based?

JANSSON: I think it was reported about 12:25 p.m. The Colorado lookout discovered it at 12:18 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: How far from the fire was Colorado Mountain?

JANSSON: About 29 miles.

GUSTAFSON: When did you first see the fire?

JANSSON: At approximately 12:25 p.m. from the Helena airport.

GUSTAFSON: After you saw the fire from the Helena airport, what was your next action?

JANSSON: I immediately called the supervisor's office to find out if they had any information on it.

GUSTAFSON: Did you know at this time that Colorado Mountain had observed the fire?

JANSSON: That is the information I got from the supervisor's office.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

JANSSON: I got the plane out and made another flight.

GUSTAFSON: What time were you over the fire?

JANSSON: 12:55 p.m., August 5.

GUSTAFSON: What was the area of the fire at the time you were over it?

JANSSON: I estimated it at 8 acres. The ground survey later showed it at 6 acres.

GUSTAFSON: What was the behavior of the fire at that time?

JANSSON: It was smoking quite a lot because some juniper trees on the east side of the fire were crowning out and the heat from these juniper trees was causing some ponderosa pine reproduction to crown. Otherwise, the updrafts were holding the fire pretty well. It looked like it had made a run and then was going to be quiet for a while.

GUSTAFSON: What were the smoke conditions?

JANSSON: Smoke was drifting toward the northwest right through the Wind Funnel. (Explained that the gap in the country along the river is referred to as the "Wind Funnel.")

GUSTAFSON: I wonder if it wouldn't be wise to put an aerial photograph up at this time and show the direction in which the smoke was drifting.

JANSSON: It was drifting toward the northwest.

MAYS: When you returned to Helena in the plane that morning, you said you noticed smoke off in that direction. You had to land to get more gas - was that the reason for landing.

JANSSON: The first time I saw the smoke, the pilot was already in his landing pattern, and he turned the tail toward the smoke. I assumed it was a garbage dump smoke. It wasn't until we got down to where the tail was turned away from the fire that we could see the smoke was coming from a different location.

GUSTAFSON: Will you show the location of the fire as of 12:55 p.m., August 5? (Jansson indicated on the map the location of the fire at this time.)

JANSSON: A strong updraft was coming out of Meriwether which caused the juniper trees to crown out and the smoke was going out in this direction. From town we saw smoke, about 6 miles from the base of the fire.

GUSTAFSON: The next question doesn't seem to be quite pertinent because we were in the area yesterday and viewed the topography. But, for the purpose of the record, I would like to have you state what the topography was in the vicinity of the fire at 12:55 p.m.

JANSSON: Very steep, rocky, which would give us a medium to high resistance to control.

GUSTAFSON: What was the accessibility?

JANSSON: Normally we term that area as inaccessible.

GUSTAFSON: How long would it have take to place ground forces on the fire?

JANSSON: Ground forces were immediately dispatched upon my arrival in town - as quickly as we could round up men. They didn't arrive on the fire until about 6 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: In what strength did they arrive?

JANSSON: 19 men, plus Hersey and myself. Twenty men including Hersey were sent on the line.

GUSTAFSON: What were the previous arrangements with local and industrial firms?

JANSSON: We had a mobilization plan. It is a little slow getting men immediately. They have to get them off shift. I believe Mr. Moir contacted the Bureau of Reclamation and Canyon Constructors, two outfits that we had agreements with. Canyon Constructors offered to send 25 or 30 men, and the Bureau of Reclamation was going to send about 10 men - about all they had available.

GRANGER: What time was it when you started getting the crew to go to the fire?

JANSSON: I made the second flight, and in the process of that flight I had the pilot radio the control tower at Helena, to telephone the supervisor's office to stand by until I landed so that I could give them a complete order for the Mann Gulch and York fires, and also soup up the manpower on the Cave Gulch fire, which was now smoking considerably, and I thought it would be better for them to wait before they did anything until I got there and could give them a complete picture of the situation.

GUSTAFSON: What basis did you use to determine the need for smokejumpers, etc?

JANSSON: Inaccessibility, and also the fact that I assumed that this fire was going to creep downhill into the updraft coming out of Mann Gulch. If we were going to hold it to a small fire we ought to hit it hard as quickly as we could.

GUSTAFSON: Did you consider the fire at the time you observed it - at 12:55 p.m. a dangerous fire to jump to?

JANSSON: No.

GUSTAFSON: Where did you believe the smokejumpers would make the jump?

JANSSON: On the 1926 burn on Willow Creek Mountain.

GUSTAFSON: For the benefit of the Board members, is that considerable distance up the mountain from the fire? (Jansson pointed it out on the map.)

JANSSON: It is about one-half to three-fourths miles up the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: When did you return to the airport from the flight?

JANSSON: 1:15 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

JANSSON: I ran to a telephone and called Dispatcher Murphy and placed an order for Mann Gulch first, and then the York fire.

GUSTAFSON: When did you return to the office?

JANSSON: Before I left there I called Canyon Ferry and asked them to take initial action on the York fire and to send more men to the Cave Gulch fire.

GUSTAFSON: I will go back to the previous questions. I understand you went to the supervisor's office in Helena shortly after you landed?

JANSSON: I arrived in the supervisor's office at 1:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Did you relate your discussion to the supervisor concerning the smokejumpers

JANSSON: On the way to the supervisor's office we got to thinking about the difficulty of getting manpower in there in time to do any good and preventing that fire from spreading into a large fire, so we decided to ask the supervisor for 25 smokejumpers.

GUSTAFSON: You used the plural "we".

JANSSON: Hersey and myself. We discussed the general situation.

GUSTAFSON: How many smokejumpers were ordered?

JANSSON: 25 were ordered.

GUSTAFSON: What time was the order placed?

JANSSON: Sometime after 1:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Did you know at the time the order was placed the number actually sent?

JANSSON: Yes - not 25, but 16.

GUSTAFSON: That is all the questions that bring the facts up to the time the smokejumpers were ordered. At this time I would like to have the Board members ask any questions that they deem necessary.

GRANGER: Any questions?

COCHRAN: Just where is this patrol point that you refer to? (Jansson pointed it out on the map)

COCHRAN: Nothing was mentioned about Jensen's discovery of the fire.

JANSSON: He observed the fire about 11:55 a.m. down the river. He came to the radio shack about 12:15 p.m. to try to report the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Is that an estimate or a solid fact that Jensen was at the cabin at 12:15 p.m.?

JANSSON: That is an estimate.

MOIR: We have a statement from the boat operator who was with Harrison at Meriwether Campground which verifies that time. I don't think he looked at his watch however. It is an estimate to that extent.

MAYS: Did Jensen just happen to meet Harrison at the boat landing when Harrison got back off the patrol point?

JANSSON: Harvey (Jensen) was taking a load of tourists down the river (Jansson at this point explained how Jensen took his tourists down the river.) When Harrison didn't come down to the landing, Jensen assumed he knew about the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Let us name the landings as we refer to them.

JANSSON: Meriwether Landing, in all cases. He (Jensen) then came back to Meriwether Landing and landed his tourists and went to Harrison's quarters and found that Harrison wasn't there. About that time Harrison came down the Mann Gulch trail back to his quarters and attempted to radio, first Canyon Ferry, and then Missoula. He succeeded in raising neither, so he asked Harvey Jensen to report the fire by telephone when he got back to Hilger Landing. There is no telephone at Hilger. This would require Jensen to go to the nearest phone - ten miles away.

GRANGER: Why didn't the radio work?

JANSSON: The Canyon Ferry radio wasn't on the air at that time. The Missoula radio during the fire season monitors the first five minutes out of every 15 on all frequencies. We had the arrangement with Harrison that if Canyon Ferry was not on the air he should contact Missoula and Missoula would call us long distance and we would get on the air. This only takes about 3 minutes. We don't keep our set on the air all the time during the fire season because continuous use may cause the radio to fail when we need it. We have no radio technician and only one set, so plan its use as we need it.

GRANGER: Why couldn't he get Missoula?

JANSSON: I understand they had some trouble with the Missoula radio that day and were off the air for awhile.

GRANGER: Did I understand you to say on your first flight on August 5 you flew over the Man Gulch fire area about 11:25 a.m.?

JANSSON: Yes, and there was no sign of fire.

GRANGER: When you flew over it again approximately one hour later, the fire appeared about 8 acres in extend.

JANSSON: Yes. We later found four lightning strikes up in that area which all had the appearance of having set a fire, probably in an area of 1 to 2 acres. It was my opinion that more than one of these strikes took off at time.

GRANGER: Is it an ordinary occurrence for a sleeper fire to achieve that size at that time of day so quickly?

JANSSON: Not ordinarily.

GRANGER: The fire conditions then were unusually bad at that time?

JANSSON: I believe it was the updraft that caused it to make that run (indicated on the map.)

GRANGER: You said that the smoke was drifting down the Missouri River, as I understand it. Was there an appreciable amount of smoke in Mann Gulch which would have obscured the view from the air into the gulch?

JANSSON: No.

HANSON: You say you talked with Harrison the morning of August 5? How?

JANSSON: By radio from Canyon Ferry.

HANSON: You mention a dispatcher that is put on in connection with your Table X- Murphy?

JANSSON: That is the forest dispatcher. The reason I called him direct instead of my own dispatcher was because it was Schmitt's first year as a headquarters guard, and since I was at Helena there was no sense in my calling Schmitt and having him relay the message to the supervisor's office. The order was too big for us to handle with our facilities at Canyon Ferry.

HANSON: How many fires did you know you had on the district at that time?

JANSSON: We had three burning.

HANSON: Did the dispatcher at Canyon Ferry take any independent action?

JANSSON: Yes, he did on the York fire and souped up the order also for Cave Gulch.

HANSON: Did the forest dispatcher take any independent action?

JANSSON: Only what I gave them.

COCHRAN: If this man Schmitt was on duty at Canyon Ferry too, why was it impossible for Harrison to reach him about noon on August 5 when he was trying to get him?

JANSSON: We had no radio schedule at that time. It was the lunch hour also and he probably was over in the cook shack eating. Our radio schedule was for 3:30 p.m.

MAYS: You asked him to report back by 3:30 p.m. - 4 1/2 hours? Wasn't that a little long for a man to get back?

JANSSON: If he went up there he figured it would take him an hour for him to reach the patrol point, and he told me he would like to spend a couple of hours up there. Then it would take an hour to come back. I also wanted him to stay up there for awhile just in case something did show up. Most of the hand-overs show up about 12 or 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The lightning was heavy in that area the day before.

PRICE: Why do you have a guard at Meriwether? What significance do you attach to protection in this particular area as against the rest of the wild area?

JANSSON: Because of the picnic area. He is a recreation guard, paid out of recreation money. His job is to keep that campground cleaned up and in repair. We threw in fire protection duty because of our skeleton fire protection organization there.

JACKSON: Had the Canyon Ferry radio been in good operating condition before the fire?

JANSSON: Yes, and continued to be until it was moved to Helena.

BLAKE: Had the antenna been checked to be sure it was installed in accordance with standards?

JANSSON: Yes, it was installed in accordance with instructions, and it operated all through the fire. The additional antenna was put up because the frequency was changed.

HANSON: Has that area in the general vicinity of Mann Gulch been mapped from a fuels standpoint?

JANSSON: Yes.

HANSON: How did you classify it?

JANSSON: I considered it a medium to high rate of spread - in my own mind. The fuel map classified it at low-low.

GUSTAFSON: For the purpose of the record, I would like to have at this time the wind velocity, relative humidity and fuel moisture two days previous to the fire, one day previous to the fire, and during the period of the fire, and those particular elements brought into a final index that the region uses in the fire danger rating.

Jansson reported as follows:

Canyon Ferry Ranger Station

August 3:	August 4	August 5
Wind velocity - 8 mph	10	16
Humidity - 24	49	22
Burning index - 56	14	71
Fire danger - 60	16	74

Hogback: (August 3)

Wind velocity - 7 mph	12	15
Humidity - 55	73	40
Burning index - 46	27	62
Fire danger - 49	33	64

JANSSON: We use fuel moisture content in the calculation of our fire danger.

GUSTAFSON: How far, approximately, is Canyon Ferry from Mann Gulch fire, and what is the difference in elevation?

JANSSON: Probably about 20 miles. The difference in elevation is about 1500 feet (minus).

GUSTAFSON: And Hogback

JANSSON: Hogback is about 8 miles from the fire. The difference in elevation is 2800 feet (more).

GUSTAFSON: At what time of day are the fire danger rating elements taken?

JANSSON: 5 p.m., except wind at 3 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Where does 72 rank in the fire danger rating scale?

JANSSON: Explosive stage. The scale goes to 100.

COCHRAN: Is it pertinent to have the fuel moisture readings in connection with this?

JANSSON: Gave the fuel moisture readings as follows:

Canyon Ferry		Hogback
6.4%	August 3	6.6%
35.4%	August 4	15.4%
5.9%	August 5	6.7%

JANSSON: Fuel moisture of 5% or less in this region is considered critical.

PRICE: As I understand it, after your flights you had three fires upon which you had to organize for suppression. How did those fires rate in danger - that is, which one did you consider the most dangerous?

JANSSON: Mann Gulch was the only one I considered at that time as a possibility of developing into a potentially large fire.

COCHRAN: As brought out by these figures here, there was evidently a very radical change between conditions on the fourth of August and the fifth of August - the fourth being from the standpoint of fire danger, and also danger to men I suppose, a relatively safe day, the fifth being quite the contrary. Why is 5 p.m. the time when these observations are made instead of earlier in the day when they would be of some value in indicating how a fire might be attacked and what the behavior might be expected to be?

JANSSON: Gisborne's philosophy on that is that 5 p.m. approaches the average peak burning conditions closer than any other time. You might have 30 minutes during the day when the fire danger would be considerably higher though.

GUSTAFSON: That is rather common practice throughout all regions - to take the fire danger rating during the period of the day which would give you more or less the highest index during the day. Another answer to that is that from the viewpoint of manpower placement - getting contributed time work out of personnel - it is very difficult to have the men there at periodic intervals to measure the numerous times in any one day.

GRANGER: How do they know how to man a fire, such as this fire, if they don't have the fire danger index for that day?

CROCKER: 5 p.m. is the peak. That is the point - the time of day - when your humidity is lowest. Your wind is approaching its highest. Your temperatures are at the peak. 5 p.m. does represent the greatest total condition of burning factors.

GRANGER: You started to man this fire well before 5 p.m. How did you know how fully to man the fire if you did not have the readings for that day?

CROCKER: We do take samples during the day. Some of the stations at low elevations take two samplings. One at 2 p.m. and one at 4:30 p.m. Those are coordinated but it is not possible, we have found through the years, to equip ourselves with the machinery that is necessary to give us a reliable, minute-by-minute danger rating. So, on the basis of yesterday's comparison, our dispatchers must take their action.

MAYS: I believe Region Six takes three readings a day - at 8, 12, and 5.

COCHRAN: How much value were the 5 p.m. readings of August 4?

JANSSON: I did not consider them. My instructions to the dispatcher the night before were, "Don't let this fool you."

COCHRAN: Because it was relatively favorable?

JANSSON: Yes.

SPACE: I think the impression is growing up here that 65 and 70 are considered critical. This is not ordinarily the case.

GRANGER: The ranger says that he considered 72 explosive.

JANSSON: At 70 we begin putting on our FF positions. I probably shouldn't have used the term explosive, but it is beginning to get serious when it gets to 70. I have to speak from my own experience. The Canyon Ferry District does not have much wind, but we have low fuel moistures throughout the season. When we get up to 70 we have a 4, 5 or 6 percent fuel moisture.

GRANGER: As to the regional experience, did the action of this fire in developing from something that the ranger couldn't see at 11:25 a.m. into a fire which he estimated to cover 8 acres somewhat more than an hour later, seem an exceptional occurrence?

CROCKER: To this extent: That it no doubt occurred in a place which was not fully represented by the measurements taken at Canyon Ferry and at Hogback. On a ranger district of 250,000 or 300,000 acres, such as this, we only sample two spots. Then estimate the relative conditions elsewhere on the district, as indicated by the sampling spots. Something apparently in this case was not estimated correctly. Maybe none of us would have estimated it right; this we don't know.

GRANGER: As I understand it then, this was exceptionally rapid action for a sleeper fire to come to life and spread over that much area in that time.

CROCKER: In my judgment, that was unusual.

**TESTIMONY OF SUPERVISOR MOIR**  
**On Events to About 2 p.m., August 5**

GUSTAFSON: Your title?

MOIR: Forest Supervisor.

GUSTAFSON: Please give us your full name.

MOIR: Arthur Duncan Moir, Jr.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your experience in fire control over the years?

MOIR: Between the period of 1926 to 1936 I had a lot of fire experience, chiefly in Region Six, also in Region One, confined chiefly to the Lewis & Clark, Flathead, Pend Oreille, and the Kootenai in Region One, and the Colville and Chelan in Region Six.

GUSTAFSON: Do you have any estimate of the number of fires in which you have actually participated in control?

MOIR: I can't give you an answer on that. I can tell you I was fire boss on the Chelan for two summers. During that time we had probably 15 or 16 fires that were anywhere from 600 to 5-6,000 acres. On the Colville the largest fire we had was in 1934 - The Aenezs Creek fire of about 20,000 acres. We had about 5 others going that same year of over 1,000 acres each about the same time. On the Kootenai I had a sector of the Deer Creek fire in '31. I had charge of several fires of 500 acres on the Lewis & Clark. I acted as sector boss on the Flathead on one of their fires in '29. Since '36 I was entirely out of the fire business until I came to the Helena in '44. Since I have been on the Helena we have had very little fire - two, I think, that were in the Class E size.

GUSTAFSON: I believe that is sufficient for the Board members.

PRICE: What were you doing between 1936 and 1944.

MOIR: I was in Region Two, and then later in Region One for about 7 years. I was second man in Ranger Management. It just happened that I never was called to participate on any fires during that period.

MOIR: Approximately 1:30 p.m., August 5, when Ranger Jansson came into the office. He and Dispatcher Murphy came into my room together.

GUSTAFSON: What were your reactions on receipt of this information?

MOIR: I discussed the matter with Ranger Jansson, and he suggested that we order 25 smokejumpers, considering the burning potential that day. We knew it was a bad fire day and the difficulty in getting fully qualified manpower locally and the inaccessibility of the fire. I fully agreed with his suggestion, and I placed a call to the fire desk in Missoula very shortly after 1:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: To Whom?

MOIR: I don't recall. I think it was Hand.

GUSTAFSON: How many smokejumpers were requested?

MOIR: Twenty-five; 16 were sent.

GUSTAFSON: Why was there this reduction?

MOIR: The dispatcher explained they were short on planes. They said they had about \*144 smokejumpers available but planes were out in other parts of the region and they felt 16 was all they could send. (\* Incorrect. Not nearly this many jumpers available. Probably 40 in Missoula. (S) Ralph Hand.)

GUSTAFSON: When the request was made for the smokejumpers, was there any information provided the dispatching desk in Missoula concerning the fire danger rating and the burning index that existed in the vicinity of the fire?

MOIR: No.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any information provided as to behavior of the fire as witnessed by Jansson?

MOIR: No.

GUSTAFSON: As to the area of the fire?

MOIR: No, just the location.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided concerning the wind conditions?

MOIR: No.

GUSTAFSON: That is all my questions to Moir. Open to questions by members of the Board.

COCHRAN: You said, I believe, that the smokejumpers were ordered partly because of the kind of day it was - a bad fire day. How did you know it was a bad fire day?

MOIR: It was extremely hot for one thing. Temperatures were very high. You could feel the lack of moisture in the air. We had no definite index of fire condition, but one gets so they feel that sort of thing and just know instinctively, I guess, more than anything else.

**REGIONAL DISPATCHERS' STATEMENTS (FRED FITE AND RALPH HAND)**

GUSTAFSON: What is your Forest Service title?

FITE: Administrative Assistant.

GUSTAFSON: What are your duties and responsibilities as regional fire dispatcher?

FITE: Sending out smokejumpers and also all the equipment and supplies. When a fire gets beyond what the forests can handle, they call on me for assistance.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, you are known as the regional fire dispatcher.

FITE: Yes, sir.

GUSTAFSON: How many years have you been performing in the capacity of fire dispatcher?

FITE: Since July 1, 1944.

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Hand, what is your title?

HAND: I am in charge of fire control planning. I was just acting as dispatcher.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your experience in dispatching?

HAND: Off and on for a good many years, both on the forest and here in the regional office. During busy times I take off if the load gets too heavy for Fred.

GUSTAFSON: We have a series of questions here which you and Mr. Fite can answer, because you work more or less together. When was a request for smokejumpers received from Helena?

CROCKER: The book the boys have in front of them is a copied record of all the orders as they are received and go through this office.

HAND: At 1:44 p.m. on August 5, 1949.

GUSTAFSON: Who placed the request for smokejumpers?

HAND: Mr. Moir of Helena.

GUSTAFSON: How many were requested?

HAND: He asked for 25. I told him we had the jumpers, but that we were short of planes. Sixteen is a C-47 load, and I offered him 16. I believe at that time the only other plane we had available was a Travelair, which would take only two jumpers. I told him at the time that if he still wanted them after the other planes came in, we could give him more. But he said, "We will take the 16 now".

GUSTAFSON: The primary reason for the reduction in strength was lack of planes at that time?

HAND: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did the requesting forest give you any information on the exact location of the fire - section, township, range, etc.?

HAND: Section 19, Township 13 North, Range 2 West.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided as to the fuel type in which the fire was burning?

HAND: No.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided as to the behavior of the fire?

HAND: No.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided as to the probable fire danger or burning index in the vicinity of the fire?

HAND: Not specifically at that time.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided concerning the general topography in the fire area?

HAND: I don't recall his mentioning it; however, I knew what it was because I was familiar with that country.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information provided concerning the probable landing spot?

HAND: No, we always leave that up to the man in charge - the spotter. It is understood that if he doesn't find a suitable spot, he will bring the men back.

GUSTAFSON: Has that occurred several times from year to year?

HAND: Yes, lots of times.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, if the spotter found the area too dangerous to jump to, he has the complete authority to bring the men back to Missoula or headquarters.

HAND: Right.

GUSTAFSON: When did you transfer the request for smokejumpers to the loft?

HAND: 1:50 p.m., six minutes later.

GUSTAFSON: Who received the request at the loft?

HAND: It isn't recorded here, but I believe it was Jack Nash.

GUSTAFSON: How was selection of jumpers to be sent to the fire made?

HAND: That is left entirely up to the man in charge at the loft.

GUSTAFSON: Who was in charge out there at the loft on that day?

HAND: I'm not sure whether Stillings was there at that time or not. He was there at some time during the day.

CROCKER: Cooley was in charge at the loft - Stillings was in the office at the time.

GUSTAFSON: Who selected the foremen for this particular run?

HAND: That is also left to the man in charge.

FITE: May I make a point? These men are put on a jump list and rotated. As men are taken out, other men are moved to the top, and that is the way the selection is made for the smokejumpers. The foremen take their turns.

GUSTAFSON: Who selected the spotter for the run?

HAND: I believe it must have been Stillings because Cooley, who was in charge at the loft, served as spotter on that trip.

GUSTAFSON: Who selected the plane?

HAND: I ordered the plane. That was at 1:52 p.m., two minutes after I gave the order to the loft. Order No. 179 for C-47 to take 16 jumpers and a radio to the Helena Forest.

GUSTAFSON: Was the radio in the plane in working condition at the time it took off?

HAND: It presumably was. I couldn't answer that specifically.

GUSTAFSON: Was any message received from the ship en route to the fire?

HAND: None that was given to me.

CROCKER: That is perhaps one of the most serious mistakes that was made in our entire report - that the airplane radio did not work; and since filing our report with you, we have found out how that came about. Cooley had attempted to report the failing of the static line for the radio dropped with the jumpers. The radio in the C-47 carrying the jumpers was in good condition. The actual log was recorded, and the messages came in at approximately 15-minute intervals.

HAND: I might add that during a busy season such as we were having, it is impossible for the radio station to call the fire desk and give us all of those contact messages.

GUSTAFSON: The reason for the question is that if there was a possible error in the original report, I want to be sure it was corrected at this time. The next question is whether any message was received from the plane en route to the fire.

CROCKER: Messages were received at 2:06, 2:29, 2:33, and 2:46 p.m. Then they were approaching the jump area and were out of communication until 4:16 p.m. They then reported in at ten miles north of Helena, had completed jumping 15 jumpers and dropping cargo. At 4:47 p.m. they reported they were two miles north of Rock Creek. They were in communication at all times except when they were jumping.

GUSTAFSON: When did the plane depart from Missoula to the fire area?

HAND: There is nothing on that in the log.

GUSTAFSON: What is the name of the pilot?

FITE: Ken Huber.

GUSTAFSON: Names of spotter and assistant spotter?

FITE: Earl Cooley, spotter; Jack Nash, assistant spotter.

GUSTAFSON: Foreman?

FITE: Wagner Dodge.

GUSTAFSON: Who else was in the plane?

HAND: Elmer Bloom, Forest Service photographer, was the only one I know of.

GUSTAFSON: What time was it when you learned the smokejumpers had landed?

HAND: At 5:10 p.m. Earl Cooley to Hand, telephoned from loft. Returned from Helena fire. Jumped the men on fire, 50 to 60 acres on the top of ridge but has made most of its run. Another fire as large 8 or 9 miles up the river. The next item I found out afterward is in error. There were two facts reported to me by Cooley: (1) That he was unable to contact Helena from the plane by radio, and (2) That something (the static line) broke when the other radio was dropped to the jumpers. In transcribing to the log from my rough notes, I evidently confused these two facts. Actually, the radio in the plane was not out of order though Cooley was unable to contact Helena or anyone in the fire area.

PRICE: Who was responsible for that estimate on acreage?

HAND: The spotter is responsible to see that someone on the fire desk is informed of the action taken, whether the men jump successfully, the approximate time that they should be on the fire, and what he can tell of the condition of the fire. In this instance it was Cooley.

GUSTAFSON: When you received the telephone message from Cooley, did he say the fire showed any signs of proving dangerous to the men?

HAND: No, he didn't mention any such thing at all.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notify Helena that the jumpers had made the jump?

HAND: I told Cooley to, and he said he did.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately when did he notify Helena?

HAND: I can't tell you. Earl told me afterward that he called right away as soon as he talked to me.

FITE: Friday was the day that was my day off from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After 5:00 p.m. when Ralph Hand goes home, I take over from my home. At 5:38 p.m. Mr. Stillings called me at home and gave me a message, 28 minutes after Mr. Hand's instructions to Cooley to call the Helena. Stillings gave me a message that Cooley had received from Helena an order for some equipment for this fire. We don't have the exact time Cooley called Helena. It's between 5:10 and 5:38 p.m.

GRANGER: How long was that after the jumpers actually landed before Helena was notified?

FITE: The plane log says that at 4:16 p.m. they had completed jumping and dropping cargo. At 5:10 p.m. Cooley was instructed to call Helena and got through between 5:10 and 5:38 p.m.

CROCKER: 5:15 p.m., according to two records I have here.

GUSTAFSON: When did the Missoula office first learn the fire had blown up?

FITE: The first we knew about this was when I called Mr. Crocker at 5:42 p.m. and informed him of the order I had just received from Stillings, which came from Helena by way of Cooley to me. The order was not clear to me, so I told Mr. Crocker about it, and he informed me that he would call the Helena office. He did, and talked to Murphy at 5:57 p.m. At that time they ordered a sector boss unit. The first that I knew that the fire had actually blown up was at 6:32 p.m. when Murphy called me and said it looked as though the fire had blown up. He said they would need both sector boss units. He also said they could see the smoke from Helena, and it was really traveling.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any discussion at that time from the Helena that they were considering the possibilities of the smokejumpers being trapped?

FITE: All he could see was the smoke. We have had fires blow up many times when men are on them and never had any difficulty before, and of course I had no idea that anyone was hurt or in trouble, and I'm sure that he didn't either. He did, however, request the second sector boss unit at that time, and I told him we had two on the way - one from the Lewis & Clark and one from the Beaverhead.

HANSON: Could you give us a brief idea what your volume of business was in the use of planes that day?

HAND: I believe most of this can be verified, although it is not in the log. As I recall, one C-47 had the motor out. Something had happened to it and it was torn out and wasn't in use until a day or two later. One Ford had taken some jumpers to the Kootenai. That is as I remember it. It was not due to return until pretty late, too late to give the Helena any help. Another Ford had taken off or was about to take off to bring some jumpers and equipment back from another fire. We were getting low, and while we still had jumpers, we were concerned about getting men and equipment back as quickly as we could. We have to do that in busy times. One Travelair was out, I can't recall where, but I am very sure we had just one C-47 and one Travelair on the line at the time, and we had other fires going. You understand that at this time we had no means of knowing that Helena was where the fire was going to blow up.

COCHRAN: Who received the radio message from the C-47?

FITE: The radio station.

COCHRAN: Is this entirely separate from your dispatching organization?

FITE: Yes, we don't try to take those. The dispatching organization in our fire office couldn't begin to receive all the messages from our radio station.

COCHRAN: Why couldn't Helena be contacted at 5:05 p.m.?

HAND: I don't know.

**TESTIMONY OF RANGER JANSSON**  
**On Events from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m., August 5**

GUSTAFSON: We discussed your action up to the time the request for smokejumpers was made. The next question is - what was your next action in connection with this fire?

JANSSON: I spent some time checking on a number of things that you always think about. I checked to see that my telephone orders had been received and were being acted upon. I contacted Schmitt at Canyon Ferry and instructed him to send a messenger to York to mobilize the local people for the York fire. He told me he had already done that. I also instructed him to turn the radio on. He told me it had been on for an hour. Then, I suppose the rest of the time before I left for the warehouse was just taken up in briefing Supervisor Moir on the situation on the whole district, which he made some longhand notes on.

GUSTAFSON: Specifically, what did you do in connection with the Mann Gulch fire?

JANSSON: I checked on my original order, and so far as the Mann Gulch fire was concerned I just waited for things to get ready where I could take off to it. During the interval, Moir and I had a conversation about boat operators, and it was decided that since we had been able to contact only one operator that I would wait until we had some men and supplies rounded up to go down there to prevent tying up the only boat we had available. At the same time I was giving orders around there and also trying to eat a fire lunch I found in the office. I got tired of waiting and went to the warehouse to try to get a truck loaded and start out.

GUSTAFSON: It is not clear in my mind just how many men - ground forces - you ordered or were trying to gather for the Mann Gulch fire after the order for smokejumpers was placed.

JANSSON: We were trying to round up 50 men. That was my first order - for 50 men; a 50-man camp outfit, camp boss unit, 3 Pacific pumps, 3,000 feet of hose; 50 fire lunches. Then, my second order was for 25 smokejumpers. During this interval in the office, which was spent mostly in conversation, the supervisor's office was trying to recruit the 50 men. At the same time we had the York fire on which my first order was for 25 men. We were attempting to round up local people to get on the York fire.

GUSTAFSON: How many men were you able to gather for the Mann Gulch fire?

JANSSON: I left with ten men.

GUSTAFSON: Is that all the men you were able to gather for the Mann Gulch fire?

JANSSON: Yes, at that moment. Hersey was going to follow with whatever else they could get (nine men and Hersey).

GUSTAFSON: Who is Hersey?

JANSSON: The ranger alternate at Canyon Ferry.

GUSTAFSON: When did you, your ranger alternate and crew leave for the fire?

JANSSON: I left at 2:20 p.m. and Hersey about 3 p.m. from the Helena warehouse.

GUSTAFSON: What distance did you travel by truck?

JANSSON: Approximately 20 miles.

GUSTAFSON: By boat?

JANSSON: About 6 miles.

GUSTAFSON: When did the crew arrive at Hilger's Boat Landing?

JANSSON: I arrived at 3 p.m. and Hersey at approximately 3:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: I want to get that point clear. When did you leave Hilger Landing for the fire?

JANSSON: At 3:50 p.m. One boat was involved.

GUSTAFSON: Hersey left later in a boat?

JANSSON: Yes, the tourist boat was just coming up the river when we pulled out. The operator I had was one Mr. Moir had located - Fred Padbury, who used his personal boat.

GUSTAFSON: When did you arrive at your destination - Meriwether Canyon?

JANSSON: About 4:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Location of destination was Meriwether. Had Hersey landed at Meriwether at the time you landed?

JANSSON: He arrived at it about 5 minutes before. He pulled into the landing and we back-watered to give them time to unload.

GUSTAFSON: What were your instructions to Hersey after landing?

JANSSON: Instructions to him were to take all the available men and go up to the Meriwether slop-over and hold that slop-over at that point to prevent Meriwether from burning up.

GUSTAFSON: For the purpose of the record, how many men were with Hersey?

JANSSON: 19 Men. I also told him to stop at the radio shack (guard station) and contact Canyon Ferry and have them put out a call to the smokejumpers to join Hersey on the ridge, and to attempt to hold only the Meriwether side. Hersey was also to place an order for two sector boss units, a 50-man camp and 50 men for Mann Gulch. On the side here, I might say Hersey and I got together at Hilger Landing. We realized, while waiting for the boat, that while we could not see any smoke from there (coming from Mann Gulch), we could see a lot from the York fire and assumed that the Mann Gulch fire was acting similarly. It looked like, with what few men we had, the best thing we could do would be to establish a camp at Mann Gulch and then scout the fire, locate the smokejumpers and probably stick them in on some sector which we were sure we could hold. This was the plan of action at that time, and it went out the window when I rounded the bend in the river and saw the slop-over in Meriwether. I considered the slop-over very serious because if it continued to run down into the bottom of the canyon it would be right at the point where it could blow out the canyon. Of the top, I considered Meriwether a worse chimney than Mann Gulch, because of its size and steepness. I told Hersey I would go down river, try to scout the fire and see if the smokejumpers had landed down river.

GUSTAFSON: When did Hersey and his crew of 19 men leave for the fire from Meriwether?

JANSSON: About 5:30 p.m., according to Hersey, but I think his watch was ten minutes fast. He had to clear the landing of equipment, open up the 50-man outfit, tool his men up, get out the water bags, fill them with water, take some first-aid equipment, line up the men into a crew, etc. He had no overhead with him nor anyone suitable for it. He then had to stop and make radio contact with Canyon Ferry. That took quite a little time.

GUSTAFSON: What route did he travel into the fire?

JANSSON: He walked up the Mann Gulch trail leading out of Meriwether. (Jansson here indicated the trail on the map.) The slop-over was about two or three acres.

GUSTAFSON: Hersey and his crew hit the slop-over between Meriwether and Mann Gulch?

JANSSON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have any idea of the expected time of arrival of Hersey on the fire's edge?

JANSSON: No. I kind of lost my time perspective. Things developed pretty rapidly. I had it figured out he arrived there probably about 5:30 p.m. I didn't think it would take him so long in camp. I just didn't allow him enough time.

PRICE: When did you actually arrive?

JANSSON: He was slowed down because the men he had were not in shape. They were not accustomed to walking in that country. I think he arrived shortly before 6 p.m.

LORING: How much elevation did they have to gain?

JANSSON: 1500 feet.

GUSTAFSON: When did you learn that Harrison had gone to the fire?

JANSSON: I naturally assumed he was up on the Meriwether slop-over or that he would have come down and radioed; or that he might have been told to stand-by there. I actually didn't know the whereabouts of Harrison. Hank was to check on that.

GUSTAFSON: When did you first learn he had gone to the fire?

JANSSON: At 6:30 p.m. - that he actually was on the fire.

GUSTAFSON: How did you find this out?

JANSSON: From the note on his door.

MAYS: After you had been up to Mann Gulch yourself?

JANSSON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any information in the note telling you when he had gone to the fire?

JANSSON: No. It said, as I recall, "Gone to the fire. Jim."

GUSTAFSON: Following your departure from Meriwether, after giving instructions to Hersey, what was your next action?

JANSSON: I asked Padbury to take me down the river.

GUSTAFSON: About what time was this when you left Meriwether to go down the river?

JANSSON: About 4:35 or 4:40 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: How far down the river did you travel?

JANSSON: To a point just opposite the mouth of Elkhorn (he indicated this point on the map). As I went by Mann Gulch the lower end of it was filled with smoke (indicated on the map). Smoke was coming down river. We turned the boat around; ashes from the fire were falling on us at this point. I told Padbury I hoped no live sparks from the fire would jump the river.

GUSTAFSON: Who is Padbury?

JANSSON: He is a druggist in Helena - and a member of the State Legislature.

GUSTAFSON: About what time was it when you were at the mouth of Elkhorn Creek?

JANSSON: About 4:50 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

JANSSON: I knew it still was safe to go up Mann Gulch, and I asked him (Padbury) to hold up at the mouth of Mann Gulch and I would go up and see if the fire had spotted across the draw and see what it was doing up there.

GUSTAFSON: What decided you to make a trip up Mann Gulch?

JANSSON: I was curious as to where the fire was.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you get off the boat and proceed up Mann Gulch?

JANSSON: At 5:02 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Yesterday you explained quite clearly to the group what you saw and your actions while traveling up Mann Gulch draw. Can you explain for the purpose of the record as clearly as you can how far you traveled up

the draw, whether or not you traveled directly in the bottom of the draw, what you saw at certain intervals that you might be able to identify as you traveled up the draw?

JANSSON: (Using map) I have only shown the rear of the fire on this map. The green color represents the way I saw the fire at the mouth of Elkhorn at approximately 4:45 or 4:50 p.m. When I proceeded up Mann Gulch at 5:02 p.m. the fire was still confined up on the Mann Gulch Meriwether ridge. I preceded to a point about 26 chains from the river. At the lower end the fire whirled and I couldn't see the fire that started below the main fire on the south side of Mann Gulch, but could see the fire set in the little gulch opposite the one from where Mann Gulch trail goes over to Meriwether. This was approximately between 5:10 and 5:15 pm.

GUSTAFSON: Then about 5:15 p.m. there was a definite fire established on the north side of Mann Gulch draw.

JANSSON: It started out first as a spot in the draw opposite the trail and a spot at my feet, which I showed you yesterday. (During this discussion Jansson was pointing to the map, and did not identify points by name in each case.) These two spots rapidly drew together. I went up further and noticed there was a series of spot fires up the north side of Mann Gulch, on the ridge in front of me and all around me.

GUSTAFSON: Those spots were established on the lateral ridges going into Mann Gulch Draw?

JANSSON: I can't tell you now just where. I have shown a few here, but there were more than that.

GUSTAFSON: About what time was it that you noticed the additional spot fires?

JANSSON: About two minutes later. I proceeded up the trail and got to where I could see the country immediately below the original fire. This is where I saw a crown fire starting and apparently moving on the south side of Mann Gulch and moving up the gulch. Since the crown fire was above me it didn't worry me.

GUSTAFSON: You mean since the crown fire was on the south side of the draw?

JANSSON: Yes. By this time Mann Gulch itself was so full of smoke in front of me that I couldn't determine anything about what was going on up above. I proceeded up to a point which measures out about 50 chains from the river, and at that time the crown fire here (pointing to map) had kind of moved down over the rocks into the bottom of Mann Gulch and was coming up toward me. I determined that the gulch was too narrow at that point to try anything else in the

bottom. I thought of pulling up the ridge, but the whirling action of the fire - which seemed to be whirling towards the northwest led me to believe that probably the north side of Mann Gulch wasn't going to be safe - that probably no spot was going to be safe at that point. So, I turned and started to walk on down Mann Gulch on the north side of the drainage on an old skid trail. When I got about 10 or 15 chains down, a whirl came right by me and in passing through that whirl I breathed some of the smoke and decided it wasn't a very good idea. It cleared and gave me a chance to get some fresh air. By that time the crown fire was coming straight toward me and I decided to get out of there. I started to run and went into the backlash and didn't breathe while I went through that. I rolled out of the fire.

GUSTAFSON: What time was it when you were approximately 50 chains up from the river, when you made the turn and decided to pull out of there?

JANSSON: About 5:20 p.m. It takes me 16 minutes now to walk from the bottom of the gulch 50 chains up river to this point. I probably got down out of the fire about 5:25 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Did you feel at the time you went up Mann Gulch that the smokejumpers may have been jumped in Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: No, I didn't think they did jump in it, and I didn't think there was anyone in Mann Gulch, because from the time I had come down the river there was so much smoke in the throat of Mann Gulch I didn't think anyone was in this country here. I assumed they either had gotten up on the Mann Gulch-Meriwether ridge and had probably worked over and joined Hersey; or, if it was too smoky and too hot in here that they had pulled out to the Ives Ranch and had set up a radio and found out what they would do now.

GRANGER: You expected they would land on a point on Meriwether Ridge?

JANSSON: Yes. But, in connection with that, the ground crew does not pick the jump spot and I knew nothing about what makes a good landing spot. That was just my own idea on the thing.

PRICE: You mentioned that if they were not with Hersey, they were where?

JANSSON: I thought they had pulled out if they were not with Hersey. I thought the fire had cleared out the gulch at that time. There was no possible way any of that gulch was going to survive that wall of flame. Not knowing where the head end of the fire was, I assumed that anyone would have gotten up on the ridge or on a trail out to the Ives Ranch on Willow Creek.

GUSTAFSON: What fuel type was the major fire in at the time you started up Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: Ponderosa pine type on the lower slope; in the upper part about one-third ponderosa pine and two-thirds Douglas-fir.

GUSTAFSON: What was the size, class and density?

JANSSON: Classified probably as dense pole stand - about 60 years old. More or less interlocking crowns, and had a few old standards from the previous stand of timber, covered an old ground fire that had gone through after logging. There was quite a lot of windfall and fine fuel on the ground.

GUSTAFSON: Was the pole stand pretty continuous on the south side of Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: No. There is a series of little gulches up there. Gulch bottoms are all practically Douglas-fir and ridges all ponderosa pine.

GUSTAFSON: What was the type on the north side of Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: Ponderosa pine, with quite a lot of windfall snags. The open parts were covered with a dense stand of bunchgrass and fescue. There was some cheat grass here and there wherever deer had bedded down, but no continuous area of cheat grass.

GUSTAFSON: Would you classify the lower end of Mann Gulch draw on the north side of the draw as heavy fuels or light fuels?

JANSSON: Medium fuel on the average?

GUSTAFSON: Would that classification hold true for the entire north slope?

JANSSON: It is medium fuel on the average through there.

GUSTAFSON: Were there large grass areas interspersed with the medium fuels on the upper side of Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: Yes, but also a number of windfalls and snags occur in the grass area.

GUSTAFSON: When did you return to the mouth of Mann Gulch?

JANSSON: About 5:25 to 5:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: In looking back up Mann Gulch draw previous to getting in the boat, what was the picture as to the fire at that time?

JANSSON: A blow-up.

GUSTAFSON: The blow-up had already taken place when you returned from Mann Gulch draw?

JANSSON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: What direction was the fire traveling at that time?

JANSSON: It had two directions. It naturally had the direction up the draw, and since the wind at this point was from the southeast it also spread towards the northwest until it got out of the influence of the wind funnel, then it was spread straight north and it was evident when I later stood on a point by the river opposite the Beartooth that it had gone in two directions.

GUSTAFSON: There was a definite funneling action taking place - a crown fire on the south side of Mann Gulch draw crowning in a northwesterly direction?

JANSSON: Practically northwest from that point.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

JANSSON: I sat there and looked at the fire for awhile. It was fascinating. Then after two or three minutes I realized I was just wasting time so I asked Mr. Padbury to take me to Meriwether so I could get on the radio. Just as we approached Meriwether Landing, Supervisor Moir was sitting in the speed boat at the landing, preparing to head down river, we met in mid river. I transferred to his (Moir's) boat, and asked Padbury to tie up at Meriwether.

GUSTAFSON: After you transferred to Moir's boat, where did you go?

JANSSON: We proceeded down river. One reason why I was held up with Padbury's boat was because it was so slow. We proceeded down the mouth of Meriwether in the speed boat.

GUSTAFSON: At what time did you reach the point opposite Beartooth Mountain?

JANSSON: At 6 p.m. we landed at the point opposite Beartooth and proceeded to walk up on the ridge or bench where we could get a look into this country to see if we couldn't determine where the fire was.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you arrive on the bench?

JANSSON: About 6:10 p.m. was when we got together up there. Dan Roose was with us - a foreman from the Lincoln District (Helena). I went up the hill as fast as I could go.

GUSTAFSON: Could you see the head of the fire from this point?

JANSSON: Not very accurately. I assumed the fire had gone through the pass.

GUSTAFSON: You weren't able definitely to locate the head?

JANSSON: No. It had some spread this way - it had gone down into Rescue Gulch, that was obvious. This was about one mile from Mann Gulch draw north.

GUSTAFSON: This was about 6:15 p.m.?

JANSSON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did you believe at this time the smokejumpers must be in trouble if they were in this area?

JANSSON: No.

GUSTAFSON: After meeting up on the bench, what was your next action?

JANSSON: We formulated a plan of action for the next day and made up an order.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any discussion at this time with Supervisor Moir or the other man there (Roos) concerning the smokejumpers?

JANSSON: I imagine we mentioned them but decided that they naturally would have recognized the symptoms and were in a safe place.

GRANGER: Would it be the customary practice for a crew on the fire, such as this smokejumper crew, to radio out what was going on?

JANSSON: Yes, they had a radio and ordinarily would set it up and establish contact.

GRANGER: Would you be in position to know whether they had established contact at any time during the afternoon up to that point?

JANSSON: No. I was away from communication.

GUSTAFSON: After discussing the situation on the bench, what was your next action?

JANSSON: We proceeded slowly to Meriwether in the speed boat. We made up our plan of action and order for the next day.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you and Supervisor Moir return to Meriwether?

JANSSON: About 6:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What was your action from that point on until you learned of the tragedy?

JANSSON: At 6:30 p.m. I went up to check the radio to make sure it worked, and transmitted the fire order for the next day. I got that order out at 6:45 p.m. on the air. Then Mr. Moir was sitting in the shelter after he left the radio shack, and I went down there to report to him that I had the order transmitted. Mr. Eaton had arrived on the fire at Meriwether. They were sitting there in the shelter talking to each other, and while I transmitted this radio on the York fire was interfering with us all the time and it was rather difficult to get a message through. The man on the radio (at York) was hysterical, he was crying and sobbing, "Send us men - more men - all the men you can get."

GUSTAFSON: Did you attempt to get through to Helena?

JANSSON: No, to Canyon Ferry.

GUSTAFSON: Did you attempt to contact Missoula by radio?

JANSSON: Yes. My first thought was that something had gone wrong on the York fire that was probably more serious than what we had on Mann Gulch, especially if there was panic in camp, as was judged from the radio conversation. I told Moir that they were pretty excited over at York and we previously on the speed boat had discussed using Eaton on the Mann Gulch fire. I told him that John Rogers, who was fire boss at that time, and assistant ranger, on the York fire, had not been on any large fires and that his fire had apparently blown up the same as the Mann Gulch fire.

GUSTAFSON: Had Eaton flown the Mann Gulch fire?

JANSSON: No, I didn't know anything about it. With the excitement going on at York our conversation was very brief. Just said to get Eaton (assistant supervisor) over there to take over the York fire.

MAYS: That was before he got to Meriwether?

JANSSON: Our conversation was before he arrived at Meriwether.

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Eaton didn't inform you that he had flown over Mann Gulch fire and that he actually witnessed the cargo going down?

JANSSON: We didn't talk 30 seconds. The panic developing at York could be a serious situation. The values at stake from the personal property and homes standpoint meant more than on the Mann Gulch fire. It developed later that the (hysterical) man on the radio was the only one who was so excited about it. My plan was to have this man bring John Rogers to the radio to determine what he had - what was going on - and try to help him organize the York fire from position at Meriwether. This man was only a laborer, not in any responsible position, and didn't know how to operate the radio. He broke the receiver in his excitement. He had been sent as a messenger to get more men because they wanted to get him off the fire. He came across the radio by accident and attempted to use it. We could not of course get an answer back to him because of the broken receiver.

GRANGER: You did place an order for men and materials on the Mann Gulch fire? With whom did you place the order?

JANSSON: To Favre Eaton if he was there, or Dispatcher Murphy.

GRANGER: Who did you talk with?

JANSSON: Dave Schmitt at Canyon Ferry.

GRANGER: At that time did you make any inquiry as to whether the jumpers had been heard from?

JANSSON: I asked him and he said no. The most pressing thing then seemed to be to find out what was going on at York.

GRANGER: What I am trying to get at is whether the absence of any radio report from the jumper crew in Mann Gulch up to that time should have been a cause for alarm as to their safety.

JANSSON: I was not alarmed for their safety, but was sure curious as to where they were. I had it in the back of my head that they must have joined with Hersey on the fire line. I decided to check on the jumpers and attempted to call Missoula and had difficulty raising the Missoula radio station. Another frequency kept interfering with our fire traffic making it impossible for Missoula to get through to us with information.

While the air was clearing up we had more orders and they were transmitted. Finally I got hold of Missoula. During this time I had more people come down there - picnickers - and we had to ask them to leave the area and also sent a message in to Helena to ask the radio station at Helena to inform the public that the Missouri River was closed to all traffic except fire traffic, I also endeavored to work over the mass of people and material and get some semblance of order in camp. The man selected for camp boss had never been on a fire, and I was trying to train him, helped him line out the cooks, set up the camp, line up a radio operator, timekeeper, etc. During this period the fire had started to drop down quite a bit from the rocks on the Meriwether side and was crowning out in patches, reflecting on the canyon walls. Hersey later told me that some of the men wanted to jump off the cliff. Some of the men were getting edgy about the fire. I assured the men we could always wade out into the river, that we were then in no immediate danger. I asked Padbury to stand by in case we had to evacuate and went back up to the radio. About that time one of Hersey's water bucks came in about 8 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Hand said that the Helena office was informed as to the jump at approximately 5:15p.m. What is the practice on the forest with regard to handling that type of information? Is it the practice for that information to be given to Canyon Ferry, in this instance, for probable radio contact with some other point on the district?

CROCKER: It is always customary to get that report to the forest.

JANSSON: I suppose his (Murphy's) reaction then was that everyone else had that information. He wasn't used to handling it.

GUSTAFSON: Suppose that this had been a crew that another district had sent in on the ground. Would it have been the practice then to notify the district ranger that he had a crew on this fire?

JANSSON: Yes, in that case. But Murphy realized I had placed the order and knew 16 men were going to be dropped, and so far as he knew there was no way of getting in touch with me. Schmitt at Canyon Ferry had told him he hadn't heard from me. We had no communication as yet. This was not established until 6:30 p.m. or so.

PRICE: When you got back to Meriwether to organize the camp, approximately how many firefighters had arrived at that time?

JANSSON: We had about four men left over after assigning overhead, cooks and flunkies to the job. This gave us about 12 or 15 men. I had figured that Hersey should have shown up around 6:00 p.m., because it was beginning to get dark. When the water buck came into camp and I asked him if the jumpers had joined Hersey,

he said no, there had been no jumpers up there. I told the water buck to tell Hersey to pull all his men off and come down to Meriwether right now. The impression I got was that Hersey had intended to stay up there quite a while because he had sent down for more water. I then attempted to get Missoula from the radio shack - Schmitt was with me. We tried to get some information about the jumpers, and I finally said we would call Missoula to see if they had jumped and if so, where. Finally I got a hold of the Missoula radio operator. He started to get the information for us and was giving us the jump location. I had to ask the operator to repeat this jump location as the air was jammed up with another radio call the first time he gave it to me. He was giving me this and I was endeavoring to copy this down about 6:59 p.m. when Dodge walked in.

GUSTAFSON: Who was with Dodge?

JANSSON: Sallee. My first reaction was, "Well, here are the smokejumpers, everything is O.K."

GUSTAFSON: What time did Moir leave Meriwether?

JANSSON: About 7:10 p.m.

COCHRAN: Did the York fire blow up in approximately the same manner as the Mann Gulch fire?

JANSSON: It just made a run.

MAYS: At 6 p.m., you were on the bench opposite Beartooth Mountain looking back at the fire. Did you see any large column of smoke or mushroom of smoke coming up?

JANSSON: I was too close to it; couldn't look high enough to get the perspective.

JACKSON: Jansson mentioned the whirling motion on the fire.

JANSSON: We had been asked to watch for that, and whether it was clockwise or counterclockwise. Gisborne asked us to do this. This was the first time I had ever seen it.

BLAKE: Were those small whirls within the fire or one big whirl that controlled the entire fire?

JANSSON: One big whirl and one little whirl side by side. The little whirl came right off the big whirl.

MAYS: From which direction did Sallee and Dodge come?

JANSSON: It appeared that Dodge came from the head of Meriwether. He actually had come in the other way. I later got that straightened out that he came by the river instead of the trail.

PRICE: You speak of the radio shack.

JANSSON: The guard shack is the same thing. The building you saw was the shelter. The guard station is on up the trail about 150 yards.

CROCKER: Parallel with this action that Bob has recited as occurring down the river, on behalf of himself and Moir, the Helena office was concurrently taking action in ordering men and supplies. The orders were being placed on the basis of the information available to them (the men in the Helena office).

**TESTIMONY OF SUPERVISOR MOIR**  
**On Events from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., August 5**

GUSTAFSON: We have carried the action in connection with your operations on this fire up until the time you placed the request to Missoula for the smokejumpers. We would like to have you explain briefly what your next action was following 1:30 p.m., and between that time and the time you met Jansson below the mouth of Meriwether Gulch.

MOIR: I think the first thing I did was to alert the boat operators - three or four of them by phone. I might explain that there is a boat club that operates an excursion boat between Hilger Landing and Meriwether, and during the summer months they make trips with a large boat which is owned by the club for excursionists. There are probably 10 or 15 around Helena who own private boats that are kept down at Hilger. My first effort was to try to contact some of those people so we would have boat transportation between Hilger and Meriwether. I had some difficulty in getting a hold of them. I checked with the dispatcher and Executive Assistant Ed Hoell to determine what was being done in recruiting manpower at about 2 p.m. ( I had talked by phone to Missoula at 1:44 p.m.) Then I put in several calls myself in an effort to raise men. I called the Reclamation Service project engineer. We have an advance agreement to furnish men on fire, and he promised he would take action right away to get a crew of engineers on the fire. They were to report to the Helena office and instructed on how to go to the fire. I called the superintendent on Canyon Constructors, and he agreed to get a crew out to the York fire with overhead by about 6 p.m. That was the earliest he thought he could get his men out there.

GUSTAFSON: Then between 1:30 p.m. and the time you left for the Hilger Boat landing was taken up with getting materials, men, etc., lined up for the fire?

MOIR: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: From the time you left Helena for the Mann Gulch fire - approximately what time did you leave?

MOIR: I do not know the exact time, but it must have been around 4:30 p.m. I got down to Hilger Landing about 5 p.m., and by previous arrangement a speed boat was waiting for me there. I found a dozen men there, including the foreman and the assistant ranger from the Lincoln District (Roos), and the man we sent down from our office as camp boss, waiting at the landing. The big boat was just pulling in and loading our equipment, etc., so I instructed the rest of the men to follow on it and I picked the Lincoln District foreman to accompany me. We got into the boat and headed for Meriwether Landing.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you meet Jansson below the landing?

MOIR: I guess it was about 5:20 p.m. He says a little later than that, am not sure of the exact hour.

GUSTAFSON: Did you make any time notation on that?

MOIR: No.

GUSTAFSON: How far down the river did you go with Jansson?

MOIR: To a point just across from Beartooth Mountain. We landed there - possibly two miles below Meriwether - and Foreman Don Roos, Jansson and I got out of the boat and went up on the bench to view the fire.

GUSTAFSON: What was the behavior of the fire, looking at it through your eyes, at that point?

MOIR: All I could see was that the fire had swept parallel to the Missouri, down river on quite a wide front, so that pretty much the whole area sloping into the river was covered by fire. The fire was still burning of course in that entire area up to Willow Creek Divide. Beyond that we couldn't see anything because of the smoke. I think that Jansson and I discussed the size of the fire about this time. We very definitely estimated it at 600 acres, though it was considerably larger than that.

GUSTAFSON: You weren't able definitely to see the head of the fire from the bench?

MOIR: No.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have any way of knowing at this particular time that the smokejumpers had landed in the vicinity of Mann Gulch or nearby?

MOIR: No, but I honestly never doubted but that the smokejumpers were on the fire. I wasn't apprehensive about them.

GUSTAFSON: You stayed on the bench a certain length of time, and then proceeded up the Missouri River to Meriwether?

MOIR: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you return to Meriwether?

MOIR: It must have been 6:30 p.m. or a little later.

GUSTAFSON: Who did you meet at Meriwether?

MOIR: There was no one at the campground when we arrived. Jansson went on up to the radio shack to send the orders that he and I had agreed on into Helena by radio.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, you and he on the trip up the river had discussed the need for manpower, equipment, etc., on the fire?

MOIR: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did you meet Eaton at Meriwether?

MOIR: He wasn't there when I arrived, but he arrived almost immediately after we got there - after Jansson had gone up to the radio shack.

GUSTAFSON: Did he make any statements concerning his flight over the fire at that time?

MOIR: I had previously sent word for Eaton to meet me at Hilger before I left Helena. He was delayed and wasn't there when I got to Hilger, so I didn't wait for him. He did mention the reason he was late was because he had flown the Mann Gulch and York fires. He told me this when I met him at Meriwether.

GUSTAFSON: Did he make any statements as to what he saw on the Mann Gulch fire?

MOIR: Not that I recall.

GUSTAFSON: What further plans were discussed while at Meriwether?

MOIR: I didn't discuss with Mr. Eaton the plans we made for the Mann Gulch fire. I told him I felt he should go back to the York fire. On my way down on the boat and in my car travel also on my way to Mann Gulch, the York fire being closer loomed up even larger than the Mann Gulch fire, and it was evident it had made a heavy run, so I told Eaton I thought he should go back to the York fire as soon as he could get there to assist Rogers - the man in charge.

GUSTAFSON: Up until the time you left Meriwether camp, was a call placed from Meriwether to either Canyon Ferry or Missoula to determine if there was any information on the smokejumpers?

MOIR: Yes, by Hersey at 5:00 p.m., Jansson and I had discussed this.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you leave Meriwether camp for return to Helena?

MOIR: I would guess it was close to 7 p.m. At least it was about 8 p.m. when I got back to the Helena office.

GUSTAFSON: When you returned to the Helena office, did you check with the dispatcher or did he provide you with any information concerning the smokejumpers on the Mann Gulch fire?

MOIR: No. I checked with him as to what he had done on the orders that had been sent him by radio from Canyon Ferry for Meriwether, but he made no mention of the smokejumpers and I didn't ask him.

GUSTAFSON: When did you first learn about the tragedy that occurred regarding the smokejumpers?

MOIR: About ten o'clock that night our executive assistant, Ed Hoell, told me that while I was at the warehouse they had received a call from Jansson asking for doctors, litters and ambulances, and that two jumpers were injured. That was the extent of the information we had at that time.

GUSTAFSON: What was the next action - specifically, did you call Missoula at that time or had a call been previously made?

MOIR: I called Missoula several times in the interval about different things, but the next action I took was to call the hospital and check with them as to the doctors, and they told me that they had already sent them sometime previous.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, the dispatching office at Helena had taken action regarding the injured smokejumpers and this was lined up?

MOIR: Yes, and my original thought was that I might be able to make contact with them (the doctors) and go down with them. I found that I was too late to do that.

**TESTIMONY OF ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR EATON  
On His Aerial Patrol**

GUSTAFSON: We have questions that are intended to be brief as to content and also will permit brief answers, so let us stick to the point. I would like to have you provide for the record your full name.

EATON: Favre L. Eaton.

GUSTAFSON: Title?

EATON: Assistant Forest Supervisor.

GUSTAFSON: What are your responsibilities, briefly?

EATON: Assistant forest supervisor in charge of fire control, timber management, roads, communications, fire improvements, general inspection, training, some personnel work, and I help in land exchange work.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your background and experience in fire control?

EATON: My first experience was in 1926 when I fought fire and chased smoke on the Kaniksu for Ranger Jim Wood; the following summer I was on two small fires on the Cache Forest in Region Four. Following that on several small fires and Class C fires on Medicine Bow and White River Forests in Region Two, some of which I had charge of as district ranger. In 1935 and 1936 I had charge of fire control on the Shawnee Forest in Region Nine where we had upwards of 200 fires a day. In 1936 I was on fire detail on the Chequamegon Forest (where Van Geisen was supervisor) on one large fire about 19 miles around. In 1937 I was on a few fires on Flatheat Forest and on detail to one fire on the Cabinet Forest; 1938 to 1941 was on several fires as district ranger on the Lewis & Clark Forest. In 1940 I took part in a regional fire training squad under direction of Vern Collins and we visited, reviewed, and studied fires on Nezperce and Kaniksu Forests for a week and then each one on the training squad took charge of a fire on the Bitterroot Forest in the Lost Horse area. I worked on the Beaverhead a year where I had been on a few smokes. After leaving the Beaverhead in 1944, I have been on the Helena Forest up to date.

GUSTAFSON: How long have you been on the Helena in the present capacity?

EATON: A little over 5 years.

GUSTAFSON: Where were you at noon August 5

EATON: In Helena.

GUSTAFSON: Did you know lightning had struck the forest the day before?

EATON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Were any special measures taken to step up the organization to care for the situation?

EATON: Yes, there were.

GUSTAFSON: What was the step-up action taken?

EATON: The aerial patrol was increased and district rangers at Canyon, Ferry, Townsend and Helena Districts alerted their men and took action on any smokes which occurred.

GUSTAFSON: When did you first learn of Mann Gulch Fire?

EATON: At about 2 p.m. I was talking to Mr. Apgar in my office at 2 o'clock August 5.

GUSTAFSON: What did you do?

EATON: I asked Ranger Jansson if he had taken action to man it. He said he had. I asked him how many jumpers he ordered. He said 16 on the way. Mr. Apgar and I were ready to leave to go to the airport. I told Mr. Moir if he needed me to let me know. I gave Mrs. Hart two telephone numbers where I could be reached at either the radio shop or airport.

GUSTAFSON: Were you going to take a flight over fire?

EATON: No - Mr. Apgar and I were testing radios, and tuning in a radio in Ranger Jansson's horse truck.

GUSTAFSON: You later made a trip over the Mann Gulch Fire. What time?

EATON: Between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What was behavior of fire when you arrived over it?

EATON: The Mann Gulch Fire when I first saw it was approximately 15 acres and pretty well strung out on the ridge between Mann Gulch and Meriwether. It appeared to be spreading up the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: What direction would that be?

EATON: In an easterly direction - somewhat to the northeast. The upper end of it was bulged out.

GUSTAFSON: What time was that when you were over the fire?

EATON: I could not get at my watch. I think it was about 3:55 p.m. I checked with Bob Stermitz's wrist watch shortly before.

GUSTAFSON: Did the Mann Gulch Fire appear to be spreading appreciably? What was spreading most at that time - the eastern head along the ridge or just what portion was spreading most at that time?

EATON: The most spread was up the ridge in an easterly direction.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notice the smokejumper plane?

EATON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any smoke in Mann Gulch draw at that time?

EATON: No.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see men jump?

EATON: I did not. Bob Stermitz, who was in the front seat with the pilot, remarked that it just finished jumping the jumpers and was apparently dropping equipment when we were over the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see any of the jumpers?

EATON: We didn't see any of the jumpers. Parachutes were seen in bottom of the draw.

GUSTAFSON: What elevation were you flying? Were you above the smoke jumping plane?

EATON: Quite a ways above, flying pretty high because the C-47 was below us and I would estimate we were 2000 feet above the ground below us.

GUSTAFSON: Did you consider the location of the jump area dangerous at the time you saw the jump being made?

EATON: No.

GUSTAFSON: When did you return to Helena?

EATON: It was pretty close around 4:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

EATON: I got out of the plane, asked the men at the radio on the ground if he transmitted the radio messages to the supervisor's office and he had.

GUSTAFSON: What radio messages - from the plane which you were in?

EATON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: What were the natures of those radio messages?

EATON: While over the York fire I wrote a message for Stermitz to transmit stating that a bulldozer would be needed on the York fire.

GUSTAFSON: Let's jump that. It has to do with another fire. Were there any radio messages written out incident to the Mann Gulch Fire?

EATON: None written out.

GUSTAFSON: Were any radio messages sent?

EATON: Yes. When we approached the Mann Gulch Fire, Stermitz radioed back the jumpers had landed O.K.

GUSTAFSON: What time approximately was this message sent?

EATON: It was probably before 4 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Whom was the radio message sent to?

EATON: Murphy of the supervisor's office in Helena.

GUSTAFSON: Through what radio?

EATON: It was sent from the plane high frequency radio to a Forest Service radio on the ground near the airport.

GUSTAFSON: Again, when did you return to Helena?

EATON: Right around 4:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: After arriving at the airport you called the supervisor's office and, according to what I understand, you said something concerning these radio messages.

EATON: No, I didn't call the supervisor's office. I checked with the radio operator at the hanger to see if he had telephoned them in and he said they had been telephoned to the supervisor's office.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next action?

EATON: I saw William Apgar, who was working on the horse truck radio and told him that I would have to go to the Mann Gulch Fire right away and hoped he could get the radio tuned in all right. I went to my car at the airport, drove to my house, and picked up my packsack with firefighting clothes and shoes, which was ready to go, and left for Hilger Landing.

GUSTAFSON: After arriving at Hilger Landing I understand you got in a boat.

EATON: Eventually. I saw Gib Olson there who said Mr. Moir just left. Asked him if Mr. Moir was around and he said no he just left as my car came around the bend, so I had to wait to get another boat. Mr. Naegle and Mrs. Naegle came down; they had a private boat and I asked if they would mind taking me to Meriwether Landing. They took me to Meriwether Landing where I met Mr. Moir.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any conversation at the time you arrived at Meriwether about the fact the smokejumpers had jumped?

EATON: I don't recall that the landing of smokejumpers was mentioned.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you arrive at Meriwether?

EATON: I don't know exactly, but I think it was probably somewhere around 7 p.m. or maybe a little before.

GUSTAFSON: Considering the fact that you saw that the smokejumpers had landed in the bottom of Mann Gulch Draw and the information was at hand that the fire had blown up, were you worried about the possible chances of the boys being caught in that draw?

EATON: No, I wasn't.

GUSTAFSON: What further instructions were given to you at that time? As I understand it, you were discussing certain fire problems with Supervisor Moir.

EATON: Our discussion was pretty short. I immediately contacted Mr. Moir and he told me that it was possible that the Mann Gulch Fire might be 2000 acres at that time. I mentioned that it was certainly a lot different picture than when I flew over the fire at 4 p.m. He also said that information that Bob got on the radio was that the York fire was really going to town and must have perhaps a mile and one-half front on it, and told me I was to go and help John Rogers on the York Fire.

GUSTAFSON: This has nothing to do with the Mann Gulch Fire but I would like to ask this question because the point was brought up previous to this. When you arrived later on the York Fire was there any evidence of hysteria in connection with the operations on that fire?

EATON: No.

GUSTAFSON: That is all the questions I have. Any more further questions?

GRANGER: Do we interview Stermitz?

GUSTAFSON: No, we have a statement from Stermitz on file.

COCHRAN: There seems to be a difference of opinion between the two of you as to the direction of the wind and how the fire was progressing at 4 p.m. when you were over the fire. Did you discuss it with him or have an understanding as to why the difference of opinion.

EATON: No we didn't discuss it.

GUSTAFSON: That is a point, Dean, I wanted too. At 4:50 p.m. Jansson said there were ashes falling at mouth of Elkhorn and certainly the wind was in that direction if ashes were falling in boat where they were, yet there was no smoke at between 3 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. so possibly between 4:15 p.m. and 4:50 p.m. the wind made that shift.

EATON: Wind apparently changed but I couldn't get the pilot to fly around the east side of the fire where the smoke was drifting. He'd fly around the north side and south and west side, but not over head of Mann Gulch, he wouldn't fly in there.

GUSTAFSON: When you arrived at Meriwether was the C-47 still there?

EATON: When we first arrived there the C-47 was flying over Mann Gulch and it made about two passes over Mann Gulch and then rose and flew off in a westerly direction before we left the fire.

GUSTAFSON: You didn't see any cargo go out? Cargo had already been dropped.

EATON: I didn't see any, but Stermitz and pilot said they saw a parachute going down.

GUSTAFSON: When you met Moir and Jansson at Meriwether did you tell them you know smokejumpers had landed?

EATON: I just mentioned I had flown over fire and fire was altogether different picture than when I had flown over it earlier. I don't believe Jansson was with us when I mentioned that.

GUSTAFSON: Was Stermitz the aerial observer?

EATON: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Any further questions?

CROCKER: I have the actual time log of the airplane. I have mr. Eaton's statement, written, in which he reports he left the fire area at 3:55 p.m.

EATON: It was 4:10 or 4:15 p.m. when we left the fire to fly back to Helena.

**TESTIMONY OF SPOTTER COOLEY**

GUSTAFSON: These questions we are about to ask are brief and we would like to have your replies as brief as possible. The first question, please give us your full name.

COOLEY: Earl E. Cooley

GUSTAFSON: Your title?

COOLEY: Parachute project administrative assistant.

GUSTAFSON: Please give us some discussion concerning your duties and responsibilities in that position?

COOLEY: I am directly assistant to Fred Stillings in all parachute operations, that is including jumping, disbursing of men and the like of that.

GUSTAFSON: What about training?

COOLEY: I have charge of all training in the spring, that is, fire training is my principal part of the job.

GUSTAFSON: How long have you been connected with the smokejumper project?

COOLEY: This is my 10th season.

GUSTAFSON: How many years have you acted as spotter?

COOLEY: From the first year we started out, each of us did our own spotting so I have actually spotted for 10 seasons.

GUSTAFSON: Have you done considerable jumping yourself?

COOLEY: Yes, I have, oh, I have about 49 jumps.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your experience in connection with fire control work?

COOLEY: For the past 10 years I have flown and jumped men and been on fires of all sizes and descriptions, you might say, and I have certainly had occasion to watch any number of them from the air.

GUSTAFSON: You had considerable experience in fires on the eastern portion of the region?

COOLEY: Personally, only two over there, they were the Dearborn fire and the Benchmark fire and then we had a fire that was similar to that down around Lander, Wyoming.

GUSTAFSON: For the benefit of the Board members it might be desirable to give a brief description of how you go about spotting jumpers into a fire area.

COOLEY: First thing we do in flying over the area, we generally look at the area for the jump spot and this jump spot is selected from the standpoint of safety to the jumpers, that is, into an area where they can land with safety from rocks and snags and then from a safety standpoint from the fire action. Now this spot can be selected at various distances from the fire where action is to be taken. It might be in many cases a mile or sometimes up to a mile and a half from where our actual fire is burning, just in order to get into a safe position.

After we once establish this jump spot, we go over the spot and drop our first drift chute out directly over the area that we have selected to land the jumpers. From this drift chute we circle and watch it go down. As it goes it might hit two or three wind drifts before it actually hits the ground. We might have an upper story wind that is going directly north and then a lower wind possibly going south. Then on most occasions we fly directly into our wind drift, drop out another drift chute beyond the jump spot and if it gets back to the spot where we want our jumpers to land that is where we will spot our men out in order for them to drift into the spot and make the correction for the wind. After this we make our approach around and drop our jumpers and then drop lower to drop out their cargo.

GUSTAFSON: I think that is a pretty clear brief statement. When did you first learn about the Mann Gulch fire?

COOLEY: I don't know the exact time but the log would have that.

CROCKER: There it is Earl copied from the record. (Shoved papers to Cooley.)

GUSTAFSON: From whom did you receive the information that there was a fire at Mann Gulch?

COOLEY: From the fire dispatcher.

GUSTAFSON: What instructions were given by the fire dispatcher?

COOLEY: Just general procedure we usually follow when we get a call from down there, we just have our regular smokejumper request that we make out and he gives us location, approximate size at the time and what action they want us to take.

GUSTAFSON: When did you leave Missoula, approximately?

COOLEY: At 2:30 p.m. the smokejumper crew left Missoula.

GUSTAFSON: How many men were in the ship?

COOLEY: There were sixteen jumpers, Elmer Bloom, the assistant spotter, pilot and myself.

GUSTAFSON: What type of ship was used?

COOLEY: A C-47.

GUSTAFSON: Was radio in C-47 working?

COOLEY: Yes it was.

GUSTAFSON: When did you arrive over fire?

COOLEY: About 3:10 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What is your estimate as to size of the fire when you arrived over it?

COOLEY: I estimated it around 50 to 60 acres.

GUSTAFSON: What was its location, not as to legal lines, but as to topographical features?

COOLEY: The fire was practically on top of the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulches and it had burned out clean to the top of the ridge and extended down oh I wouldn't say over a third of the way down the ridge between the top of Meriwether and the bottom of Mann Gulch.

GUSTAFSON: When you say clean, do you mean it had crowned out or had it just crept down that far?

COOLEY: It had crowned out from where the fire had started and crowned up along the top and what was left was just burned timber.

GUSTAFSON: What direction was the smoke drifting at that time?

COOLEY: Definitely northeast, I would say north about 40 degrees east.

GUSTAFSON: Did that put it up along the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulches?

COOLEY: Yes, it was pretty near following the general direction of the ridge cutting a little to the west of Willow Mountain. That is the general direction.

GUSTAFSON: Can you draw a general pattern of the drift of the big body of smoke from that fire.

COOLEY: It was going just about right from this way, right straight up along here. (At map.)

GUSTAFSON: That is okay. What was the behavior of the fire at that particular time, 3:10 p.m.

COOLEY: I would say it was relatively quiet in that it had made its run up to the top of the ridge. The only activity that I could see at that time was a little bit rolling down back through the green timber and burning back up to the main burn. At the time we flew around it there was no visible spot any place on the outside of the main perimeter of the fire.

GUSTAFSON: That was approximately 3:10 p.m.?

COOLEY: Yes, that is right.

GUSTAFSON: Next question, as you sized it up at that time, shortly after 3:10 p.m. did you consider the fire to be dangerous from view of a potential blow up?

COOLEY: I certainly didn't. I thought that the heat of the fire was mostly over because it had already burned to top of hill and had hit some rocky ground where fuels were not bad.

GUSTAFSON: Had you received any information previous to leaving Missoula concerning probable fire danger, or burning index, at that time?

COOLEY: No, nothing in particular but we did know it was hot and as far as that was concerned we knew that before we left the airport, of course.

GUSTAFSON: Did you feel burning index was relatively high that day, with your knowledge of fire control?

COOLEY: Well, I would have to say that it was.

GUSTAFSON: Who selected the actual jump area?

COOLEY: Dodge and I selected that more or less together and as is generally the case of the spotter, he will go around and locate that spot and point it out to the jumper foreman or whoever is in charge of the fire and ask

him what he thinks about it and discuss it and decide between them what the chances of jumping in these certain places are. It was decided between Dodge and me that it would be the appropriate jump spot.

GUSTAFSON: You consider that Dodge had approved final selection of the jump area?

COOLEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Had you made any other tentative selections for jump areas on this particular fire and cancelled them out?

COOLEY: Yes, on our first pass around we noticed near the head of the fire directly in line with the smoke that there was a place on the ridge top but it was awfully narrow and just on first glance around we looked at it but before we even got around to it we decided it was no good because if we had any wind drift whatsoever we would go over the cliff into Meriwether or down further into more dangerous ground. It just wasn't practical. We did notice this one small opening right in front of the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have any other tentative selection as to jump location?

COOLEY: No, there was one spot and that was up near where the helicopter landed but as far as a jump spot down in the area where the fellows did land was probably as good a spot and then it was closer to the fire action.

GUSTAFSON: Do you know approximate time when jump area was finally selected?

COOLEY: I would imagine roughly about 3:20 p.m. or 3:15 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What distance did you believe the jump area was from the fire that time?

COOLEY: I figured it was a good strong half mile from the closest point of the fire and it was probably 500 feet or better below in elevation from the main fire.

GUSTAFSON: Was the closest point to the jump area on the head of the fire or the northeast corner or the flank of the fire?

COOLEY: I would say it was the northwest corner, on the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: In other words the jump area finally selected was not at that time in the advance of that fire?

COOLEY: No, not by quite a ways.

GUSTAFSON: When was the first jump made? I appreciate the time elements are difficult to tie down because you were lying down on the floor of the plane and not taking your watch out.

COOLEY: I would say about 3:35 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: How many men went out in first jump?

COOLEY: Four.

GUSTAFSON: Who was first man out?

COOLEY: Dodge.

GUSTAFSON: Did they land fairly close together or were they scattered?

COOLEY: They were fairly close together, that is I have seen them scattered a good deal more.

GUSTAFSON: How many turns did it take you with the plane before you got all the men out?

COOLEY: Four passes.

GUSTAFSON: How many in each stick?

COOLEY: Four - four - four and three the last stick.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately when was the cargo dropped?

COOLEY: The cargo was all out and on the ground by 4:08 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Was it badly scattered?

COOLEY: Not too bad. It was scattered more than cargo generally is because we did not drop down in elevation because the air was too rough that day in general; we just dropped the cargo at practically the same elevation as we dropped the jumpers.

GUSTAFSON: You took 16 jumpers and only 15 jumped. What is the reason the 16th man didn't jump?

COOLEY: He got sick.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have any failures in cargo dropping?

COOLEY: The radio, yes.

GUSTAFSON: What was the cause of this failure?

COOLEY: The static line that is inside of the plane that is hooked on to the radio. It broke off right in the plane and went down with the radio. I think from looking at the pictures and from what I could see, the radio when it went out just kind of tipped over and bound the static line against the side of the radio which would take the weight of the radio to tip it back over again before it would open the chute and I think that's what sheared the static line off at that time.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you leave from the fire after dropping cargo?

COOLEY: I looked at my watch and it was 4:12 p.m. When we had all the cargo out we made one final pass around the fire. When we crossed the river it was 4:12 p.m. when I looked at my watch. That is one time when I did definitely check my watch.

GUSTAFSON: What was the condition of the fire when you made the final pass?

COOLEY: I might have missed something, but I couldn't see any spots. On Lower end in one particular place the fire had rolled down maybe 50 to 75 feet from the main edge and that is the only place I could see anywhere around the fire that indicated much spread. (In other words fire had not spread materially between 3:10 p.m. and 4:12 p.m.)

GUSTAFSON: When men jumped in Mann Gulch was it clear or was it filled with smoke?

COOLEY: It was clear.

GUSTAFSON: When you left in the plane which direction was smoke traveling at that time?

COOLEY: It was traveling northeast in the same general direction as when we came in. With all of cargo passes and all men and everything we dropped, we went down canyon just about a quarter mile beyond the jump spot and all men drifted back into the jump area which showed a very definite consistency of wind in that direction because they were all about a definite northeast direction, that is where they drifted back into.

GRANGER: I would like to get the relation between your description of direction of smoke and the situation which Jansson described under which ashes were falling in the boat.

MAYS: It was at 4:50 p.m. that Jansson the ashes.

GRANGER: That was after Cooley had left the scene.

COOLEY: We left about 4:12 p.m. 4:12 p.m. is the time that we were actually leaving the fire. We made the swing before that. Just before I left we crossed the river and that is when I looked at my watch.

GUSTAFSON: On the return to Missoula were any radio messages dispatched from the plane?

COOLEY: We tried to get Helena. We tried to radio them on our way in when we made our first pass about 3:10 p.m. I know because I was up in front and we couldn't raise Helena but did get Missoula right along. We got out 8 or 10 miles from the fire and contacted Missoula again at that time.

GUSTAFSON: Did you advise them that the jump mission had been completed?

COOLEY: Yes, in Missoula.

GUSTAFSON: Was any information as to where the men were jumped dispatched to Missoula?

COOLEY: I don't believe it was that I remember on that, because the pilot made that contact and I don't think he mentioned the jump spot to the station here at Missoula at that time.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notify the dispatching desk upon arriving back?

COOLEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: At what time did you arrive back in Missoula?

COOLEY: Just about 5 p.m., 3 or 4 minutes to 5 because the fellows were just getting ready to leave the loft.

GUSTAFSON: Did you call Helena?

COOLEY: I put in a call to Helena immediately after I got back and in the meantime called the dispatcher's desk.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you get Helena?

COOLEY: About 5:12 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What is nature of information you transmitted to Helena?

COOLEY: I told them we dropped 15 men in place of 16 they had ordered and the approximate location and also in conversation it was brought out that the Helena advised me they had a report from Dodge on the fire and he had ordered 70 men but I told them then that the cargo radio was definitely destroyed and only thing that I could see might have happened was that the

radio might have hung up in a tree and that was the only way he could get a report through. It was found out later that the order did not come from Dodge on the fire. I told them at the time the approximate location of the area where the fellows had jumped.

GUSTAFSON: Did you also inform them they had all gotten down safely?

COOLEY: Yes, that they were all okay.

GUSTAFSON: Do you have the complete authority as a spotter on one of these missions to cancel a jump if you believe it unsafe?

COOLEY: We have the privilege to cancel any jump any time if we don't feel it is safe. We have the authority to bring the men back any time.

GUSTAFSON: Has that happened quite often in the past 10 years?

COOLEY: Numerous times, yes. We have been sent a number of places where we have had to bring men back. Some on account of terrain, there was one case over in Benchmark. It wasn't safe because the wind was too strong. We got the order the evening before and by morning the fire wasn't where they figured it was going to be by morning and we returned because it would have necessitated jumping the men in too dangerous an area or on the road some distance away from the fire.

PRICE: Had you instructions to land the men at Helena if there was too much wind or for any reason you could not jump the men?

COOLEY: Yes, but there wasn't too much wind and we did jump the men so there was no object in landing at Helena.

MAYS: Is that the same static cord that you use to drop the men with that came loose?

COOLEY: No that is a static line at top of C-47. This cargo static line is fastened to one of the seats. It wore at the place where it was fastened to the inside of the plane.

LORING: Had it been used?

COOLEY: Yes, that is the trouble I think, worn badly.

LORING: Was the radio the last thing you dropped?

COOLEY: With that static line, yes. We took a static line off of one of our regular chutes and tied the same place and continued our dropping.

PRICE: Had this fire spread very much during the time you were over the area?

COOLEY: I couldn't see that it had spread but very little other than just rolling down slightly and burned back.

GRANGER: Do you ever send a spare radio for dropping separately?

COOLEY: We did think once of carrying an emergency radio in all planes but it got so we had so much weight in the planes we had to cut down to a bare minimum to get our required number of jumpers in. In a Travelair, two jumpers is all we can carry and if you load it up with a lot of accessories you just aren't going to get your two jumpers in.

GUSTAFSON: Would it have been practicable to drop another radio from Helena if importance of it had been recognized?

JANSSON: No radios available at Helena.

COOLEY: I imagine it would. The thing is, we reported it as quickly as we could get in contact with the Helena. We did know that other larger crews were coming in and it was possible they would have radios if they knew ours was inoperable.

COCHRAN: Do you have any generally recognized standards or guides for safe landing spots or is that left primarily to the judgment of the individual spotter?

COOLEY: That is left to the judgment of the spotter. It can't be learned in one season's experience or just flying around now and then. Jumping experience is where you really get that, where you look at the spot from the air and then actually get out and jump down there and see what you've got on the ground so many times that then you've got a pretty good idea of what you have got on the ground. We don't have any spotters who haven't jumped.

LORING: Was the primary objection to the jump spot where the helicopter landed later, due to being farther from the fire?

COOLEY: When you are jumping for a ridge top you have got a wind current on top of the ridge at which place you are going to get more wind--and of course on one side you have up air and down air on the other. It is better if you can get down where the slope gradually goes off into the bottom and your jumper more or less hits an equilibrium and he stays right in the middle and will come down better than hitting for the top of the ridge. You have got a better chance of men hitting the spot. It is easier to land if he has a little up draft. If one gets on the back side or gets over that slope in down draft he comes down pretty hard. An up draft helps considerably.

GUSTAFSON: At the time, the wind was moving the smoke along the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulches and slightly to the west of Willow Mountain which kept Mann Gulch in the clear as far as smoke was concerned.

COOLEY: The radio which we found yesterday was definitely right below where Reba's cross was so it was definitely about a short quarter down draw from where the fellows landed, the radio was in a freefall so it would indicate where we were dropping the men out. They had to drift back that far.

BLAKE: Do you definitely make a check to see if each man arrived okay in the area?

COOLEY: We have a signal; every individual puts out an L if they are O.K.; a double L is put out by the foreman or the fellow in the clear if everybody is okay and he has contacted everyone. That is the final word. If you can check every one and see every single L out you know they are all okay whether they contacted the foreman or not. When they definitely contact the foreman, he puts out a double L and then there is no question about safety of everyone on the ground.

MAYS: You got a double L on this.

COOLEY: Yes.

Someone asked a question about jumping near the river.

COOLEY: We looked that country over and decided that if there was any wind blowing it is hard to take a man out over the river where it is decidedly risky because if something unforeseen happens he might find himself in the river before the wind picked him up. Then you have gusty wind he just won't make it. I would rather not drop them if they have to jump over a river. If anything goes wrong he just won't make it back.

LORING: Was this jump spot as close to the river as you want to get?

COOLEY: No, we could have gotten closer as long as we didn't have to go over the river. If we could have continued down within a quarter mile of the river and our wind was constant we could have dropped further down. Couldn't drop further down this gulch because it was too rough. It is hard to see from the air how steep it is. To a fellow who has never been up in the air, a steep slope looks level. Actually, a jumper would roll a hundred yards on a side hill as steep as the lower part of Mann Gulch.

**TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER SALLEE**

GUSTAFSON: (After introductions and prefacing talk.) Please give us your full name.

SALLEE: Robert Wayne Sallee.

GUSTAFSON: What was your title at the time of your Forest Service work this summer?

SALLEE: Smokejumper-fireman.

GUSTAFSON: What has been your smokejumper experience? How many seasons previous to this one?

SALLEE: None.

GUSTAFSON: Your previous experience in connection with firefighting?

SALLEE: I spent two years in blister rust control on the Kaniksu and received fire training etc. It was quite a bit of training.

GUSTAFSON: How many fire jumps have you made previous to this?

SALLEE: None.

GUSTAFSON: How many total jumps including training jumps?

SALLEE: Seven training jumps. Three others since.

GUSTAFSON: Who was smokejumper foreman on this trip?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately what time did you leave Missoula?

SALLEE: About 2:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately when did you arrive over the fire?

SALLEE: I would say 10 minutes to 4 or quarter to 4.

GUSTAFSON: But you didn't check by a watch?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: Were you able to see the fire?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: What was your size-up of the fire as to size?

SALLEE: I thought at the time it was probably about 100 acres.

GUSTAFSON: What was behavior of the fire -- where was the smoke drifting?

SALLEE: Up the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulch.

GUSTAFSON: Was there quite a volume of smoke?

SALLEE: Not too much.

GUSTAFSON: What was the character of the fire -- was it flaring up or creeping along?

SALLEE: It was creeping along, it wasn't burning very much.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notice any spot fires from the Mann Gulch fire below its flank in Mann Gulch?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: Had the fire at this time crossed over into the Meriwether side of the bluffs?

SALLEE: No, it was burning right on top of the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: Burning slowly up and along the ridge?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Was Mann Gulch at this time filled with smoke?

SALLEE: Not in the bottom but about 2,000 feet up where the plane was flying, it was smoky.

GUSTAFSON: You were out in the second stick?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Who was the first man in the first stick?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge.

GUSTAFSON: How near the target did you come?

SALLEE: I came within about 60 yards of Wag Dodge's chute. I partially hung up in a tree brushing the ground and this made it a very easy landing.

GUSTAFSON: How widely scattered were the jumpers when they reached the ground?

SALLEE: They were all within 300 yards of each other.

GUSTAFSON: Was anyone hurt?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge hurt his elbow.

GUSTAFSON: Seriously?

SALLEE: It looked deep but not too bad.

GUSTAFSON: Did it incapacitate him?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: How shortly after arriving on the ground was it before you were able to get out of your chute and observe what was going on?

SALLEE: A couple of minutes.

GUSTAFSON: When was cargo dropped?

SALLEE: Within 10 minutes after I jumped.

GUSTAFSON: Was cargo very widely scattered when it reached the ground?

SALLEE: Yes, it was quite scattered because they had to drop from so high.

GUSTAFSON: Could you see the fire from the cargo storage area?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Could you see the flank of the fire on the Mann Gulch slope quite plainly?

SALLEE: We could see the flank.

GUSTAFSON: were there any spot fires below this flank at that time  
(after you helped gather the cargo)?

SALLEE: Not that I could see.

GUSTAFSON: Was the flank lifting at all?

SALLEE: It was picking up then.

GUSTAFSON: What instructions did you receive after landing?

SALLEE: We were told to gather the cargo and then get a bite to eat.

GUSTAFSON: Who gave these instructions?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge.

GUSTAFSON: How long did it take to get organized after the boys  
all reached the ground and gathered the cargo? How long would you  
thing that took?

SALLEE: I would say 45 minutes to an hour.

GUSTAFSON: What time was it when all cargo had been gathered at the  
cargo gathering point down in the draw?

SALLEE: About quarter after 5, I believe.

GUSTAFSON: Who was in charge of the crew as of this time?

SALLEE: Bill Hellman.

GUSTAFSON: What instructions were given after all the cargo was  
gathered and stored at the dropping area?

SALLEE: After we had got a bite to eat, we were supposed to go up to  
the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Who was in charge when you went up to the fire?

SALLEE: Bill Hellman.

GUSTAFSON: Where was Wag Dodge?

SALLEE: He had gone to see who was shouting.

GUSTAFSON: Could you distinguish any words?

SALLEE: No, just a yell.

GUSTAFSON: When Dodge went up to the fire were you able to hear instructions that he provided to the crew?

SALLEE: He told Hellman to see the men got something to eat and come up to the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately how long after Dodge left did the crew start up to the fire?

SALLEE: About 10 minutes.

GUSTAFSON: After you started up the hill for the fire, how far did the crew get up the hill before meeting Dodge?

SALLEE: About half way to the fire.

GUSTAFSON: Who was with Dodge at that time?

SALLEE: The smoke chaser, Jim Harrison.

GRANGER: Do you mean that the crew was half way up the hill on the south side of Mann Gulch up toward the side of the hill on which the fire was?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: What tools -- were you double tooled or single tooled?

SALLEE: I had the saw and the rest of the fellows were all doubled tooled.

GUSTAFSON: Have you any idea as to the approximate time it was when you met Dodge and Harrison coming down from where he met Harrison?

SALLEE: No, I'm afraid not.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge or Harrison at the time you met them coming down from the fire, appear worried about the condition of the fire?

SALLEE: I think Wag Dodge was worried. I can't remember if he appeared worried, but it seems -- I believe he was worried.

GUSTAFSON: What were his instructions at this point?

SALLEE: He told us to go back down into the draw and head for the river.

GUSTAFSON: Were the boys all together at this time?

SALLIE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge follow you fellows down the draw right then or did he catch up with you later?

SALLEE: He went to get something to eat and then he caught up with us later.

GUSTAFSON: Did Harrison go with him at that time?

SALLIE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Then what did the crew do after Dodge and Harrison left to go back to the cargo area.

SALLEE: They crossed the draw and started angling up the other side, going towards the river.

GUSTAFSON: As I understand you, the crew crossed Mann Gulch draw to the north of Mann Gulch and started for the river, but angling out of the draw, is that what you mean?

SALLEE: That's right.

GRANGER: Why did they angle out of the draw instead of taking right down the draw?

SALLEE: I'm afraid I couldn't answer that. They were just following the leader.

GUSTAFSON: When did Dodge and Harrison catch up with the crew? Was the crew quite close together at this time?

SALLEE: They had separated into two bunches. I don't know what happened to the second bunch but the bunch I was in was 500 feet ahead of the others somehow. We stopped there and waited and they caught up.

GUSTAFSON: At the time Dodge and Harrison caught up with the crew were you able to observe the fire at that time?

SALLEE: We could see the fire.

GUSTAFSON: What did the fire look like towards the river?

SALLEE: The smoke seemed to be coming from straight across the draw.

GUSTAFSON: Were you worried about that time?

SALLEE: No, I don't think so.

GUSTAFSON: When did you first get worried?

SALLEE: When Wag told us to go back up the hill.

GUSTAFSON: After Dodge caught up with the crew what did you do then, continue in your same line of direction towards the river climbing out of the draw as you went, or was something else done?

SALLEE: We continued.

GUSTAFSON: About how long was that after Dodge caught up with the crew that you continued towards the river?

SALLEE: About another eighth or quarter of a mile.

GUSTAFSON: What was the situation then? Why didn't you continue further?

SALLEE: I believe Wag saw the fire ahead then. I noticed a lot of smoke over a little hogback.

GUSTAFSON: Down towards the river on your side?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: What were his instructions at that point?

SALLEE: He told us to turn back and go up the hill.

GUSTAFSON: Was the crew pretty well together at that particular location?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: What did you and the crew do next?

SALLEE: We all turned up the hill and we didn't follow the line we had been following -- we all turned and formed a new line and that's where I got from the back of the line towards the front.

GUSTAFSON: You were grading out of the gulch as you went -- going back the other direction?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: Did the crew still have their tools with them at the turn?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: When and where did you receive instructions to discard your tools?

SALLEE: Oh, in about 200 yards.

GUSTAFSON: Describe the location of the place you received the instructions to discard your tools.

SALLEE: It was fairly open timber and quite grassy and it was steep and we couldn't make too good time there.

GUSTAFSON: That is where you discarded your saw?

SALLEE: Yes, sir.

GUSTAFSON: Where did most of the boys discard their tools?

SALLEE: Some of them discarded them there and I don't know where the rest of them did. I believe some of them carried them further up the hill yet.

GUSTAFSON: When they discarded their tools, were the boys pretty much together?

SALLEE: They were spread out quite a bit -- not an awful lot.

PRICE: Who was in the lead? Who was setting the direction?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge.

MAYS: Where were you in line at this time.

SALLEE: I would say fourth or fifth.

MAYS: where was Hellman?

SALLEE: Right in front of me, I believe. But after we dropped our tools, he stopped and started hollering at the other guys to hurry up.

GUSTAFSON: Who gave the instructions to drop the tools?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge gave the instructions first and then Bill Hellman.

GUSTAFSON: Did he give instructions to drop all the tools, or do you remember particularly the words that Wag Dodge used at that time? We are just trying to get the thing down as clearly as we can.

SALLEE: I believe at that time he said, "Throw away everything that's heavy."

GUSTAFSON: Did the crew throw away everything that was heavy or keep their hand tools, or did they throw away all the tools at that point?

SALLEE: I believe that most of them threw away all their tools, except the smoke chaser, Harrison.

GUSTAFSON: When you made the turn down there and Wag saw the fire down the draw ahead of him coming up towards him, did you get an opportunity at that point to make an estimate as to the distance the fire was from that point?

SALLEE: No, I didn't.

GUSTAFSON: Now after you dropped the tools, do you have any idea how far the fire was away from you at that time?

SALLEE: It was fairly close; I would say 75 or 100 yards.

GUSTAFSON: Was it burning, flanking up towards you?

SALLEE: Yes, sir.

GUSTAFSON: Coming pretty hot?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: How far did you travel after dropping the tools before you and the crew reached the grassy area after pulling out of the scattered stand of timber?

SALLEE: Not over 75 yards.

GUSTAFSON: What was done then?

SALLEE: Wag Dodge started throwing matches on the ground and started a fire.

GUSTAFSON: Were any statements made as of that time that you recall -- made by Wag Dodge?

SALLEE: He said, "Up this way."

GUSTAFSON: Did you understand what he was doing when he started setting fire to the grassy area?

SALLEE: I understood that he wanted us to follow his fire up along side and maybe that his fire would slow the other fire down.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge appear excited at this particular point?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: Now I'll ask the reverse question, did he appear cool.

SALLEE: I'd say, yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did the fire that Dodge set spread rather rapidly?

SALLEE: It spread rapidly going straight up but it didn't go along the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: In other words the fire that he set went straight for the ridge?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: After the time he set it?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: How far below the ridge is your estimate of the location that Dodge set his fire?

SALLEE: Two hundred yards.

GUSTAFSON: What was the type of country in which he set his fire?

SALLEE: It was very open and rocky with a lot of grass.

GUSTAFSON: What about the steepness?

SALLEE: It was quite steep too.

GUSTAFSON: How close was the main fire to the fire set by Dodge at the time he started setting his fire? I know these things happen so rapidly that it is pretty hard to picture, but if you can give us a fairly accurate estimate we would like to have it.

SALLEE: I would say, 50 yards.

GUSTAFSON: You stated a moment ago that Dodge said, "Up this way," and you understood that he was attempting to set a fire to provide the boys some protection. Did you hear any further instructions from Dodge after that time?

SALLEE: Not until I was almost to the top of the ridge.

GUSTAFSON: Was he hollering at the boys?

SALLEE: He was hollering at the boys then but I couldn't understand him.

GUSTAFSON: Now when he set his fire, do you recall how many men were close to him?

SALLEE: I thought it was just myself and Rumsey and Diettert.

GUSTAFSON: I see, three. How far do you suppose the other men were away?

SALLEE: Well, there were some that were quite close, but I couldn't say how close all of them were, for sure.

GUSTAFSON: After Dodge set his fire, what were your next actions?

SALLEE: I just headed straight for the top of the ridge, instead of angling along, I went straight up aside of his fire.

GUSTAFSON: What side was that?

SALLEE: The east side. I was going almost straight up.

GUSTAFSON: I know you were moving pretty fast at this time. I suppose if I had been there I'd have been moving fast too, but what was the depth of the edge of fire that Dodge set? How high was it burning off the ground?

SALLEE: In places it was burning about a foot high -- from a foot to 3 feet, I would say.

GUSTAFSON: Now this is a question very difficult for me to ask, but I think we must have an answer to it. I think you have given us the answer already, but we will ask the question specifically, "Did the fire set by Dodge make it difficult for you to escape?"

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: Did you hear any member of the crew, and you don't need to mention names, say anything about that time or shortly after the time Dodge set his fire?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: You don't recall about the time the fire was set by Dodge?

SALLEE: I couldn't say for sure but I would say approximately 5 after 6 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: About what time was it that you made it over the ridge?  
And how far was the main fire behind you as you stepped over the ridge?

SALLEE: The main fire that I could see as I went over the ridge was clear back down at the bottom of Dodge's fire.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, the main fire as you passed over the ridge had reached the bottom of Dodge's fire?

SALLEE: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: Were any men with you shortly before you passed over the ridge?

SALLEE: Two.

GUSTAFSON: Who were they?

SALLEE: Walter Rumsey and Diettert.

GUSTAFSON: When did you last see Diettert?

SALLEE: There was a cleft in the rocks and Rumsey and I went through it and Diettert was going around, and I last saw him when he had started around.

GUSTAFSON: How far over the ridge did you have to go before you reached a point of safety?

SALLEE: About a hundred yards.

GUSTAFSON: And what was that safety area?

SALLEE: Slide rocks.

GUSTAFSON: Was anyone with you at that time?

SALLEE: Walter Rumsey.

GUSTAFSON: How long were you in this rock area before the fire reached it?

SALLEE: Approximately 5 minutes.

GUSTAFSON: Was the fire spreading rapidly?

SALLEE: Not coming down our side. For the first 200 yards it burned quite slow.

GUSTAFSON: When did it pick up speed?

SALLEE: After it passed the rocks.

GUSTAFSON: What is the nature of this speed? Did it start rolling?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did you fellows get fairly hot in that rock area?

SALLEE: It was kind of smoky but we didn't get very hot.

GUSTAFSON: After the fire had passed your rock slide and you felt it may be safe to leave, what was your next action?

SALLEE: We started shouting to see if anyone else was around.

GUSTAFSON: What did you find?

SALLEE: We heard someone that sounded like a long ways off to the west, but it was only about 30 yards. We went over there and found Bill Hellman. Rumsey stayed with him and I thought I would go back down and try to find our first-aid kit, but it was too hot down in Mann Gulch so I went back down to where they were.

GUSTAFSON: Did Hellman at that time seem to be suffering tremendously?

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Did he make any statement to you at all?

SALLEE: He just said to tell his wife something, but I can't remember what it was.

GUSTAFSON: After you had gone to find the first-aid kit and couldn't find it, and went back to Hellman, what did you do next?

SALLEE: Almost right away after that we heard someone shouting up on top of the hill.

GUSTAFSON: Who was it?

SALLEE: It was Wag Dodge. So we hollered back and then I went up and met him about halfway down our side.

GUSTAFSON: Did Wag dodge appear excited at that time?

SALLEE: No, he didn't appear excited -- he just looked kind of -- well you might say, dumbfounded or shocked.

GUSTAFSON: After you met Wag Dodge, was he burned at all?

SALLEE: No.

GUSTAFSON: Were you surprised to see him?

SALLEE: No, I thought there was probably certain of the guys had gotten into his fire.

GUSTAFSON: You figured that they had a chance to pull through if they had gone in.

SALLEE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: After you met him up there, what was the next step?

SALLEE: He said he had found Sylvia on the other side and that he was burned pretty bad.

GUSTAFSON: What did you do then?

SALLEE: Then we went to where Rumsey was and debated on what would be the best way to get out. Then Rumsey stayed with Hellman; Dodge and I went down the side of the ridge that we were on and found an open place in the fire where it was not burning very heavy and we went down to the river and put a shovel up there. Dodge tied a handkerchief to it and we started along the river. We didn't have any map so we didn't know which would be the best way to go and we went about a mile in the wrong direction but we saw a boat coming down the river and they turned around at the mouth of the draw -- then turned around and went back -- so we decided we had better go that way. We went up the river about two miles and we heard a dog barking on the other side so we hollered and there were some sight-seers over there and they came and picked us up and took us to Meriwether Camp.

GUSTAFSON: About what time was it when you started for the river?

SALLEE: I couldn't say.

GUSTAFSON: You have answered these questions very admirably. We do not like to have to ask a man to relive a tragedy too often, but the Board may want to ask other questions. If you will bear with us a little bit longer, we will throw the meeting open to the Board members for questions.

COCHRAN: What direction was the smoke drifting across Mann Gulch? Was it moving toward the west?

SALLEE: Towards the north.

GRANGER: What time do you mean? There are several time elements here.

SALLEE: Do you mean when we first turned back?

COCHRAN: What was your size-up of the fire at 3:45 p.m.? You said about 100 acres and the smoke was going up the ridge at that time.

SALLEE: That's right.

COCHRAN: Did you see it going across Mann Gulch toward the west at any time?

SALLEE: No.

PRICE: After you turned back, was there any discussion at all on what might be done to get away?

SALLEE: No, I don't believe so, not that I was in on.

MAYS: When you went up along the side of the fire to the top of the ridge, the fire that Dodge set, and you and Rumsey went through the notch in the rocks, you say Diettert went around. Did he go around to the left side or the right side?

SALLEE: He went around the right side, going up.

MAYS: Further away from the fire than you fellows were?

SALLEE: That's right.

CROCKER: When you started up toward the top of the ridge along Wag's fire, could you see the fire ahead of you in Mann Gulch across the dropping area, I mean?

SALLEE: I hadn't seen any up there.

CROCKER: You hadn't seen any fire across the head of the draw?

SALLEE: No.

CROCKER: Could you see it in the bottom of the draw down by your jumping site?

SALLEE: I didn't look that way. I was watching in the other direction. That is probably why I didn't see any.

GRANGER: Did you get the impression when Dodge set the escape fire that he thought that might be the only way for the crew to save itself -- to get into that escape fire area?

SALLEE: That's right, because the main fire was -- I didn't understand that. I thought he wanted us to go along the side of his fire and his fire would slow the main fire down.

GRANGER: You didn't understand that you were to get inside of that fire?

SALLEE: No.

GRANGER: Do you think the crew, any of them, understood that was his purpose -- to burn off an area in which they could then get and stay there until the fire passed over?

SALLEE: Well, I believe that they all did because Walter Rumsey realized that was what he wanted to do and when I got to the top of the ridge there Dodge was hollering to several of the other fellows that I could see and he went in and they could see what he was doing.

GRANGER: Why do you think most of them started to take to the top of the ridge instead of following his lead?

SALLEE: Well, the ridge looked so close; it looked like we were almost there.

GRANGER: Do you think there was any difference of opinion between the two leaders there as to which was the best course of action?

SALLEE: No, I didn't.

MAYS: Were you ahead of Rumsey going up the hill along side of Dodge's fire?

SALLEE: We were almost even until we went through the rocks and then I went through first.

GRANGER: Is there any question as to what the result would have been if the crew had gone inside of the escape fire? Do you think they would have pulled through?

SALLEE: I believe they would have.

PRICE: When you crossed the ridge to the north was there any fire on the other side?

SALLEE: So, not directly in front of us. There may have been down the ridge further towards the left (west).

GRANGER: If I understand you correctly, do you think that the men who took out for the ridge knew they were making a choice between what Dodge advised them to do and their own decision? In other words, it was a clear choice and they chose to take the other course?

SALLEE: Yes, I believe so.

LORING: Was the smoke in the area pretty heavy when Dodge set his fire?

SALLEE: No, not just then, but twice -- the smoke lifted and rolled over again.

COCHRAN: You weren't entirely clear yourself as to what Dodge wanted - that is, whether he wanted the others to get inside his fire and yet you think the others were -- that they understood more clearly than you did?

SALLEE: I knew as soon as I turned around at the top of the ridge and looked back, that was what he wanted.

COCHRAN: But you were up there before you understood it?

SALLEE: That's right, but then after I got on top of the ridge I didn't think I should go back.

MAYS: You were out ahead of most of the crew, and the other members of the crew were just coming by his fire at the time you made the top?

SALLEE: That's right.

MAYS: They were right there so he could holler at them, but you had already gone on ahead and were at the top of the ridge, you and Rumsey.

SALLEE: That's right.

MAYS: How far was Hellman behind you fellows when you went over. There was Diettert and you and Rumsey, the first three to make the top of the ridge. You and Rumsey about together and Diettert went around the right side of this cleft in the rocks and where was Hellman then?

4

SALLEE: I couldn't see.

MAYS: You didn't see him behind you?

SALLEE: No, the last time I saw him was when we threw the tools away.

CROCKER: Bob, Did Hellman get burned on the Mann Gulch side of the ridge or after he crossed over the ridge?

SALLEE: He told us that he got burned right on top, just as he hit the top of the ridge.

GRANGER: Did he cross the ridge to east or west of you -- that is, was he further up the ridge or further down the ridge when he crossed.

SALLEE: He must have crossed almost the same place.

(Hanson, Granger Price and Sallee gathered around an aerial photograph.)

HANSON: Bob, this is a map of the area and this is Dodge's fire here and you went over into this rock slide here. You must have passed right up through here.

SALLEE: Right up along there, I believe.

HANSON: Was that timber on fire when you went through there? That black stuff is timber.

SALLEE: I couldn't say, because there wasn't any fire over here but -

HANSON: There wasn't any fire over here?

SALLEE: No.

HANSON: And as you got up there you couldn't see any fire coming in from this side? (Meaning up the gulch, on his right.)

SALLEE: No, I didn't see any, but I didn't look and I didn't look over here either.

HANSON: Then the fire that burned over you, did it come from this direction here?

SALLEE: It burned down from this direction first? (Meaning from up the gulch.)

HANSON: From this direction first, over here?

SALLEE: That's right, and then back up this way. (Meaning from down the gulch.)

Several talking at once, unintelligible.)

PRICE: That' the run that got Diettert?

HANSON: Undoubtedly that pincer movement was much more acute at the time.

GUSTAFSON: Quite often you don't see the flame at all because there is no flame there; there is just a great mass of super-heated air that comes out and hits you.

SOMEONE: There is proof that there was quite a bit of fire around there because Diertert got into that when he went around the right side.

BLAKE: Was the wind strong at the time and at the place where Dodge set his fire?

SALLEE: Yes, it was strong all the way up that side.

PRICE: Had you received any instructions in the training period as to what to do in emergencies like this?

SALLEE: Well, we were always told that a fire would slow down or stop when it got to the top of a ridge or just after it broke over the top, it would slow down enough so it wouldn't be dangerous. As far as a grass fire like that -- we weren't given instructions on what to do in an emergency in a grass fire.

PRICE: Were you given any instructions about getting in water, if water was available?

SALLEE: No, I don't know whether we were told or not, I just imagine that everybody should know that.

PRICE: Were you given any instructions in the technique of setting escape fires?

SALLEE: No, we were never given any instructions on setting fires like that.

GRANGER: Were you ever told that if you got into a tight situation to be sure and follow the instructions of the leader?

SALLEE: We were told to always follow the leader.

HANSON: When did you start getting scared, Bob?

SALLEE: Oh, I think when we turned back up the hill after we quit angling towards the river and went back towards the top of the ridge.

HANSON: Hellman was with you at that point, about 5th man in the load?

SALLEE: Yes, he was approximately 4th or 5th.

MAYS: And then he dropped behind when they dropped the tools?

SALLEE: Yes, when we dropped the tools, he stopped and started hurrying the other guys along.

MAYS: Did he get in the tail end of the crew?

SALLEE: I don't know whether he stayed down there long enough to get in the tail end or what. I imagine he waited until they all caught up.

PRICE: When Dodge set his fire, was Hellman in the tail of the crew or up with you?

SALLEE: I believe he was behind me. I am positive he was behind me, quite aways behind me, pretty near to the tail of the crew.

CROCKER: Did Dodge ask him to go back there and bring up the tail end of the crew?

SALLEE: No.

BLAKE: Did the fellows seem to be pretty well exhausted at the time Dodge started his fire?

SALLEE: The only one that I know anything about was Harrison, the smoke chaser. When Rumsey and I passed him he was sitting down resting. He still had his pack on, and he looked exhausted.

GRANGER: That was when Dodge set the fire? Did he still have his pack with him then?

SALLEE: It was just a little before that.

JACKSON: Did you notice any signs of panic among the men?

SALLEE: No, they all seemed to act fairly cool.

LORING: Were you behind Dodge at the time he started to set the fire?

SALLEE: Yes.

CROCKER: I believe, Bob, in the morning coming out of the ashes you mentioned to me there on the river bank that you hesitated a little bit there when Dodge was starting the fire wondering just for sure what the purpose of it was.

SALLEE: That's right.

CROCKER: During that time did the other boys pile up there and stop?  
Was there a number of them that stopped there?

SALLEE: I don't believe there was. I didn't notice but I don't believe there were. Rumsey and Diettert went ahead -- went on -- I just hesitated for a minute and then went on too.

GUSTAFSON: Did you recall any particular identifying location as to where Dodge set his fire? Were there any trees, or large trees around it, or do you remember?

SALLEE: No -- we just broke out of the trees -- just before that. I couldn't say how far away they were or anything like that.

HANSON: Did you take part in evacuating Hellman or Sylvia that night?

SALLEE: Yes, I helped take Sylvia out the next morning.

HANSON: You were at Meriwether camp, where was it you met the doctors?

SALLEE: We met the doctors down at that draw that we came out, I guess they call it Rescue Gulch. We went down in the boat, Wag and I did, and waited for the doctors there.

LORING: Did Dodge report that he had seen any of the other men besides Sylvia?

SALLEE: He reported that two were all right and that two were burned.

LORING: Did he report that he had seen some others besides Sylvia?

SALLEE: Well, he had seen Hellman and Sylvia.

LORING: Hellman and Sylvia, those were the only two he had seen?

SALLEE: That's right.

Mr. Granger thanked Sallee for answering our questions.

**TESTIMONY OF KENNETH HUBER: (C-47 Pilot)**

GUSTAFSON: (After introduction and preliminary explanation to Huber.)  
For the record will you please give us your full name?

HUBER: Kenneth Huber.

GUSTAFSON: What are your duties with the Johnson Flying Service?

HUBER: I am a pilot there.

GUSTAFSON: Have you had much experience in piloting ships transporting  
smoke jumpers to fire operations?

HUBER: I have done that for the last three years. This is my fourth  
fire season with Johnsons. I transported paratroopers when I was  
in the Service.

GUSTAFSON: What was the time of your arrival over the fire? Do you  
have it?

HUBER: I do not have it.

GUSTAFSON: When you were making a circle around the fire to give  
Cooley and Dodge time to select a jump area, did you have time to  
size up the fire?

HUBER: I think I sized up the fire pretty well.

GUSTAFSON: What is your opinion as to the direction of the spread your  
first time over?

HUBER: The fire was going in a north to northeasterly direction, up  
the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulches.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notice any spot fires on the slope immediately  
below the flank of the fire in Mann Gulch?

HUBER: No spots.

GUSTAFSON: Did; you notice any spots immediately in advance of the  
lead of the fire? Was the lead of the fire up the ridge? Did it  
seem to be traveling in that direction?

HUBER: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Were there any spot fires in advance of the lead?

HUBER: No.

GUSTAFSON: Did you notice any on the Mann Gulch side in the rear of the fire?

HUBER: No.

GUSTAFSON: In your size-up, how far would you calculate it to be from the point selected as the jumping area to the nearest part of the fire?

HUBER: Three quarters to one mile.

GUSTAFSON: Where was the jump area selected, at what location was it?

HUBER: It was at the head of Mann Gulch.

GUSTAFSON: When the men left the ship, what was the relationship to the jump area - was it down the draw? After the jump area was selected near the bottom of Mann Gulch draw and the men left the ship, did they leave the ship or down the draw from the jump area?

UBER: I am quite sure that they left it down draw from the jump area. Generally when they are jumping you are flying pretty much on instruments and you are watching the directional gyro and the altimeter and air speed and all that sort of thing that you are worrying about and you don't know where you are headed. Once I glanced out of the side and they were drifting back to the spot at the head of the gulch.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any smoke in the flight pattern in making the run for the jump?

HUBER: I would say on the first two drift chutes and the first pass there was no smoke. After that the smoke became more dense until at the end of the cargo you couldn't see through it. We could see straight down but there was no forward visibility from our position of dropping. We couldn't see the lake or mountains or either side of Mann Gulch. We were in smoke at an elevation of approximately 1200 feet. That was done differently than we usually do because that day the air was so rough and I wouldn't take the airplane down to a lower level to drop. Mr. Cooley directed me on the dropping.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you arrive back in Missoula?

HUBER: The only time I have a record of is when I punched the time clock and it was 5:14 p.m. when I went back in the office and punch the clock.

GRANGER: Did you have any question as to the safety of the jump area with respect to the location of the fire?

HUBER: No. My personal opinion is that it wasn't a dangerous jump area. I have seen jumpers go into areas that could amount to much more and nothing was ever thought about it. I am not a firefighter, of course, so I really don't know.

GRANGER: But you have piloted planes on a good many jumps?

HUBER: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: From your viewpoint you considered this a routine operation?

HUBER: Yes, I considered it very much so.

COCHRAN: You weren't concerned about the change in conditions when the gulch filled up with smoke?

HUBER: I myself was not concerned as far as the smoke jumpers were concerned because where we dropped them the smoke wasn't as dense as when we dumped out the cargo. When I continued flying down Mann Gulch, that was where we ran into smoke -- when we were dropping cargo.

CROCKER: Was the smoke going up high or billowing?

HUBER: I would it was going up higher.

CROCKER: You could have dodged around it pretty easily?

HUBER: Had the air not been rough I would have been able to do better, rather than flying through it, to go down into the bottom of Mann Gulch and go out over the lake. I would have had better visibility.

CROCKER: In leaving the fire you came back over the jump spot to take a look to see if the boys had out their L's, I suppose?

HUBER: Yes, sir.

CROCKER: Then you took off directly towards Missoula?

HUBER: Yes.

CROCKER: Did you fly through smoke between there and the river?

HUBER: Through smoke, yes sir, (heading back towards Missoula).

CROCKER: The main column of smoke?

HUBER: No, no, it was more or less a haze, it wasn't the main column of smoke. The main column of smoke was rising, I would say it was going on up instead. When we circled the men there we took out at a low altitude. We weren't over a thousand or five hundred feet above the ridge I would say.

TESTIMONY OF PHOTOGRAPHER ELMER BLOOM

GUSTAFSON: For the record, what is your name?

BLOOM: Elmer P. Bloom.

GUSTAFSON: Title?

BLOOM: Photographer, Motion Pictures.

GUSTAFSON: How was it you went along on this flight to Mann Gulch Fire?

BLOOM: I was requested by Fire Control to make 3 training films during the summer on aerial freight delivery. Comprises 3 training films called Cargoing, Loading and Dropping, and Retrieving, and happened to go along on this trip to get pictures of cargo dropping.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you leave Missoula?

BLOOM: 2:30 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What time over the fire?

BLOOM: About an hour later.

GUSTAFSON: What was the approximate size of fire when you arrived over it?

BLOOM: Looking down at the fire from the air, I estimate the fire first time I saw it to be 50 acres.

GUSTAFSON: What was general drift of smoke from the fire when you first saw it?

BLOOM: From east to west.

GUSTAFSON: Show it on the map.

BLOOM: (Shows on map direction of smoke from east to west.)

GUSTAFSON: Was Mann Gulch screened from air by the smoke to any appreciable degree?

BLOOM: That I can't answer. At the times we went over the fire I wasn't even looking at Mann Gulch. My main object was the fire itself and position of men leaving the airplane. (For purpose of taking pictures.)

GUSTAFSON: What was behavior of fire? Did you have an opportunity to observe?

BLOOM: At the time the fire looked to me like a ring on top of ridge; and circling the ridge the behavior of smoke was erratic.

GUSTAFSON: Who selected the jump area for this jump?

BLOOM: As far as I know on this trip Earl Cooley who was spotter for the load.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see the men jump and get down O.K.?

BLOOM: They all left the airplane O.K. I did not see them land.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you leave the fire, approximately?

BLOOM: Cargo dropped approximately 4:15 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: Were you able to observe the fire at that time?

BLOOM: Yes, I did observe it. In fact, about the first time I did not use a camera -- just looked out to see it. The end toward river looked awfully hot when we left, about 4:15 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: What time did you arrive back at Missoula?

BLOOM: About 5:05 p.m.

GUSTAFSON: I have no further questions.

CROCKER: In taking pictures I gather seeing them this morning you take them at a very steep angle. When you left that spot did you fly through smoke?

BLOOM: No. We didn't fly through any smoke. There was a thin layer underneath, but wasn't main smoke of fire.

CROCKER: If smoke was blowing to the west then you could not get back to Missoula without flying through it?

BLOOM: As I said before, the smoke was going in all directions for a while. When I first saw it, it was in that direction. (East to west.)

MAYS: You said the end toward the river looked awfully hot just before you were leaving it. Which way was smoke going from that hot end of fire? Towards river or the other way?

BLOOM: If going towards river I could not see it so it must have been going the other way.

PRICE: What was the direction of the target spot from the plane when men were released?

BLOOM: Men are released directly over the target spot more or less -- it would be slightly toward the west.

GUSTAFSON: In other words, the plane was down draw from the target.

**TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER RUMSEY**

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Sallee has just completed his testimony and we don't like to make it difficult for anyone to answer questions so feel perfectly relaxed and at ease. The questions I am going to ask are going to be brief and where possible hold answers to a brief reply. For the record, what is your name?

RUMSEY: Walter B. Rumsey.

GUSTAFSON: Title during current summer?

RUMSEY: Smokejumper-fireman, SP-6.

GUSTAFSON: What experience have you had in fire control work previous to joining the smokejumper project.

RUMSEY: I was station fireman at Superior the summer before. The summer before that a lookout-fireman and went on a few fires that summer.

GUSTAFSON: How long have you worked for the Forest Service as a smokejumper?

RUMSEY: This is my first summer.

GUSTAFSON: Had you had any fire jumps previously?

RUMSEY: That was my first fire jump.

GUSTAFSON: How many jumps had you made in practice?

RUMSEY: Seven.

GUSTAFSON: Is that the general number?

RUMSEY: I believe so.

GUSTAFSON: How many jumps have you made since?

RUMSEY: Four.

GUSTAFSON: To actual fires?

RUMSEY: Yes, four.

GUSTAFSON: Who was the smokejumper foreman on the trip to the Mann Gulch fire?

RUMSEY: Wag Dodge was man in charge.

GUSTAFSON: Squad leader?

RUMSEY: Mr. Hellman.

GUSTAFSON: Do you know approximately the time you arrived over the fire?

RUMSEY: Only approximately. It was in my written report. I really don't remember what I wrote in it.

GUSTAFSON: Were you able to see the fire from the plane previous to the time you got there?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Your estimate about size of fire?

RUMSEY: Approximately only - close to 75-80 acres.

GUSTAFSON: Where was it located?

RUMSEY: It seemed to be right on the ridge, maybe down slightly.

GUSTAFSON: Was that the ridge between Meriwether and Mann Gulch?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: What was the smoke drift at the time you were over the fire?

RUMSEY: It was going up the ridge between the two gulches (Mann Gulch and Meriwether) as far as I could determine.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any opportunity for you to observe any spot fires on the Mann Gulch flank?

RUMSEY: No, I did not.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see any spot fires in advance of the head of the fire up the ridge between Mann Gulch and Meriwether?

RUMSEY: No, I did not. It was burning intensively in only one small place and it did not seem to have gone out ahead of the line there yet.

GUSTAFSON: Did you feel at that time that the fire appeared dangerous as far as you were concerned?

RUMSEY: The thought never entered my head. I remember thinking it would be an awful fire to mop up because it was rocky and steep, but it didn't occur to me it was dangerous.

GUSTAFSON: When did you jump?

RUMSEY: First stick.

GUSTAFSON: Who made first jump?

RUMSEY: It was either Dodge or Hellman, I'm not sure which.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have a hard landing?

RUMSEY: I had a hard landing on ground but wasn't hurt in any way.

GUSTAFSON: How near target did you come?

RUMSEY: The jump area could have been large. No particular point you could aim for and far as I know I hit fairly close to where I had been dropped to.

GUSTAFSON: Did you leave the plane down the draw from where you landed or up draw?

RUMSEY: Left plane down draw.

GUSTAFSON: How far do you think you floated?

RUMSEY: Very hard to say.

GUSTAFSON: You left plane down draw from where you landed?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Were the jumpers fairly widely scattered when they reached the ground or were they fairly well concentrated, say in a 5-acre area.

RUMSEY: They were fairly widely scattered.

GUSTAFSON: Were any jumpers caught in trees? Any hurt?

RUMSEY: Wag Dodge hurt elbow on a rock. Received a small gash in his elbow. His arm was stiff. A day or two later it got stiffer, but nothing serious.

GUSTAFSON: When was last cargo dropped?

RUMSEY: After the last jumper was out.

GUSTAFSON: Was cargo widely scattered?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: How long after jumpers reached ground before they got out of their suits and parachutes and collected cargo at a certain point?

RUMSEY: A maximum of 45 minutes I would say.

GUSTAFSON: How long did it take to drop the cargo after the jumpers had jumped?

RUMSEY: Not over 30 minutes.

GUSTAFSON: Was the cargo collected in a particular area?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Were the cargo chutes collected and already in a particular area?

RUMSEY: Yes, it was but not in same place that the man parachutes were.

GUSTAFSON: Where were man parachutes with reference to the cargo area?

RUMSEY: They were on up a short ways.

GUSTAFSON: From the cargo area did you have an opportunity to view any portion of the fire?

RUMSEY: Yes, I tried to see what it was doing but as I remember there was very little we could see from that position.

GUSTAFSON: You were in first stick going out, was there any definite amount of smoke in Mann Gulch?

RUMSEY: No.

GUSTAFSON: After landing and gathering cargo what was done?

RUMSEY: We heard a shout over on the fire and Dodge told us to wait at the cargo with Hellman and get a canteen of water and a little food and he was going over and try to locate this other man and then we were to follow shortly.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge go to fire?

RUMSEY: No, he didn't go clear to the fire. He found this other man a little below the edge of it.

GUSTAFSON: Did he give instructions to Hellman or any member of the crew - or were they all together?

RUMSEY: We were all together.

GUSTAFSON: He gave instructions for you to follow him up the hill to the fire?

RUMSEY: Yes, he said he would go ahead and we were to follow later as soon as we got ready.

GUSTAFSON: Did you have any feeling about who was in charge after Dodge left to see what the hollering was about?

RUMSEY: Hellman was in charge.

GUSTAFSON: Approximately what time do you calculate it to be when Hellman with the crew left to follow Dodge up the hill?

RUMSEY: I believe I have that in my notes too. I don't remember - somewhere around 5 p.m. You can check that.

GUSTAFSON: How far up the side of the hill on the south side of Mann Gulch did the crew and Hellman go before you met Dodge.

RUMSEY: From the bottom of the gulch I don't think it was more than 150 yards - a short distance.

GUSTAFSON: When you met Dodge was someone with him?

RUMSEY: Yes. Harrison.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge at this particular moment appear worried or excited?

RUMSEY: No, not that I could tell. Dodge has a characteristic in him. It is hard to tell what he is thinking.

GUSTAFSON: After the crew contacted Dodge and Harrison at this particular point what were Dodge's instructions?

RUMSEY: He said we were to go down the gulch, up the other side, and more or less follow the contour towards the river.

GUSTAFSON: To whom did he give this instruction?

RUMSEY: I think he gave it to the group.

GUSTAFSON: What did Dodge do next?

RUMSEY: I don't know. We started walking in single file down into the gulch and went up the other side and somewhere along there I missed him and we seemed to be in two groups and we went on down the gulch on contour, maybe we worked a little up and Navon was in the lead I believe at the time and we decided to wait for the other boys.

GUSTAFSON: When did Dodge and Harrison catch up?

RUMSEY: Shortly afterwards.

GUSTAFSON: After Dodge and Harrison caught up with you what was the action of the crew? Were they all together

RUMSEY: Fairly close, yes. We were in single file.

GUSTAFSON: After Dodge caught up with the crew on north side of Mann Gulch what did the crew do then?

RUMSEY: Dodge took the lead and we went a short distance in same direction and switched back.

GUSTAFSON: Was this along same line that you took when you received instructions to follow contour, what caused you to turn and go back up the hill?

RUMSEY: Dodge, evidently, because he was in the lead. At the time the fire started burning a little more fiercely. We all noticed it. A very interesting spectacle. That's about all we thought about it.

GUSTAFSON: When Dodge instructed the crew to go down towards the river did he indicate what he intended to do?

RUMSEY: Yes, he seemed to think it would be best and safest if we worked on the lower side of the fire as he thought it would be too dangerous to be on the front end of the fire.

GUSTAFSON: You continued approximately how far from that turning point when you reversed directions climbing towards top of Mann Gulch Ridge?

RUMSEY: We went all the way in the same direction.

GUSTAFSON: When did you receive instructions to get rid of your tools?

RUMSEY: It was shortly after we had turned.

GUSTAFSON: Can you describe the type of country?

RUMSEY: It was rocky and there was quite a lot of brush around and grass and trees, scattered trees, it wasn't dense.

GUSTAFSON: Did crew have instructions to discard all tools?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GRANGER: At the time you reversed direction did you see fire across Mann Gulch at lower end? Did you realize that the change of plan was occasioned by fear that you could not get out lower end?

RUMSEY: No, I did not.

GUSTAFSON: Was the crew fairly close together when they discarded their tools?

RUMSEY: It seems to me they were pretty well strung out. Some naturally slower than others. I was in the lead. It seems there were 4 or 5 and then a little ways back, about 100 feet, the rest.

GUSTAFSON: When you discarded the tools were you able to see the fire?

RUMSEY: When I threw my saw down I could see the fire was on the north side of the gully but I did not when we made the turn.

GUSTAFSON: How far after dropping the tools did the crew go before they were out of the timber?

RUMSEY: I really don't know. It was a transition zone there and it was hard to know. Some of the boys seemed reluctant to throw their tools away. Don't know why. They needed urging to get rid of them.

GUSTAFSON: Just what happened for next minute or two?

RUMSEY: We continued on up in the same direction. There were at least three boys ahead of me. Diertert was ahead of me still carrying a shovel and pulaski. I took the shovel from, which I threw away. I realized the danger and put all I had into it. About this time getting out of danger seemed to be most clear. From the point I began to think about getting out of there I had my eye on the ridge. I had noticed that a fire will wear out when it reaches the top of a ridge. I started putting on steam thinking if I could get to the ridge I would be safe.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge do anything?

RUMSEY: He stopped and lit a fire.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any statement made to crew at that point?

RUMSEY: Not that I heard. I wasn't right on him. I was behind him. I say him bend down and light it. Fire burned up right now. I did not hear him say anything. There was a terrible roar from the main fire. Couldn't hear much. I remember thinking it was a good idea but could not keep the ridge out of my head.

GUSTAFSON: Did you know why he set the fire?

RUMSEY: I remember thinking that was a good idea but don't remember. I don't remember why, don't know whether I understood. If I had fully realized it I probably would have gone right in. I kept thinking the ridge - if I can make it. On ridge I will be safe. I went up the right hand side of Dodge's fire.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge's fire make it difficult?

RUMSEY: No.

GUSTAFSON: How high were flames off the ground?

RUMSEY: Waist or shoulder high. I don't know. As these thoughts come to me I can remember thinking if I have to I can dodge across his fire and get into his burn but when I got half way up the side of his fire I could feel the heat from the big fire on my back. I forgot about his fire and made for ridge.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see fire on your right?

RUMSEY: No. There was an opening between large rocks and I had my eye on that and I did not look either way. Diettert was on my right and below me.

GUSTAFSON: Did you see Dodge step into his burned area?

RUMSEY: No.

GUSTAFSON: Was there any hollering?

RUMSEY: No. Might have been - wasn't hearing much.

GUSTAFSON: Was anyone else in your vicinity?

RUMSEY: Sallee.

GUSTAFSON: How far over the ridge did you have to go before you reached the point of safety?

RUMSEY: I do not know for certain how far it was.

GUSTAFSON: What was type of the place on which you found safety?

RUMSEY: It was a long narrow rock spread. We just happened to run into it.

GUSTAFSON: Who was with you?

RUMSEY: Sallee.

GUSTAFSON: How long before the fire reached this point?

RUMSEY: It reached this point at different times I think. Not more than 5 minutes maybe not that long. It burned one side and while it burned that side we went down to the lower side and when it burned the lower side we went to the top side. We traveled fast.

GUSTAFSON: When did it reach you?

RUMSEY: It was very peculiar. We sat and watched it. The fire would be burning down slope a short distance and wind would stop and turn and it would burn the other way. It spotted across a gully and it burned rapidly there and then it started back the other way. Wind was very variable.

GUSTAFSON: What was your next move?

RUMSEY: Smoke had cleared enough so that I could breathe when we stood up and we decided to go back where the other boys were. Before we left the rocks we hollered. Then we heard a cry down below us down towards the fire. Distance hard to estimate. We went to the bottom of the fill and found Hellman sitting on a rock.

GUSTAFSON: Did he make a statement?

RUMSEY: No, he did not say anything about the fire.

GUSTAFSON: After you met Hellman what was your next move?

RUMSEY: Sallee and I went down to Hellman and I don't remember whether we heard Dodge or saw him silhouetted against the smoke. We met Dodge. I stayed with Hellman and Sallee went with Dodge. Sallee and I talked it over in the rock spread and we figured Dodge made it and though sure other guys had too.

GUSTAFSON: Did you feel you should have followed Dodge?

RUMSEY: Yes, we chastised ourselves for being so stupid for not going in his fire.

GUSTAFSON: Did Dodge seem excited?

RUMSEY: I don't think Dodge is ever excited. He never moves fast. Very deliberate. Always knows what he is doing.

GRANGER: Did you understand the purpose Dodge had in setting fire?

RUMSEY: I don't believe I did. I think it was a good idea.

GUSTAFSON: When you took off?

RUMSEY: I was thinking only of my hide. Somebody said "To hell with that."

GRANGER: Could you identify that person if necessary?

RUMSEY: I think so. Could not swear to it but pretty sure.

GRANGER: But you definitely heard someone say it?

RUMSEY: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: Do you think that influenced others?

RUMSEY: I don't think it did because I do not think many guys heard him. I don't know who was behind him. When I was with Dodge I did not look back but when I got up a little ways I saw one guy there but do not know who it was.

COCHRAN: Where were you when you heard that?

RUMSEY: Just left Dodge and just started up the hill. I think I left before he even said it.

GUSTAFSON: What did you do when you found the injured boy?

RUMSEY: Dodge and Sallee left me their canteens and Dodge had a can of white potatoes which he left and Dodge and Sallee went to the Missouri to get help and I stayed with Hellman.

GUSTAFSON: Did he say anything?

RUMSEY: I believe he did mention one boy but I don't remember. He did not have much to say.

GUSTAFSON: Did Hellman say anything during the time you were with him?

RUMSEY: He wanted to know about the other boys and of course I did not know but the way Dodge acted it did not seem very likely that they were alive, but other than that we tried to get him in a comfortable position which was difficult.

GUSTAFSON: Do you know definitely whether Hellman got burned with the fire before he got over the ridge or after?

RUMSEY: His shoes were burned off and seat of pants was burned out and that seemed to indicate that he was going away from the fire and after the fire burned over him all he could think about was water and he tried to get to Missouri River which you could see as sort of a glare down there.

(Hanson asked Rumsey to show on map.)

HANSON: Was timber on fire when you went through there?

RUMSEY: No. Evidently we went above it.

HANSON: Did you see any fire here when you went through?

RUMSEY: It was very smoky. I don't think I did. There might have been some. Could not say.

GUSTAFSON: What direction did the smoke come from?

RUMSEY: Burned top side and then burned bottom side.

GUSTAFSON: Do you know what direction you took after you turned back? You spoke of seeing the top of the ridge. Did you feel this was wrong in any way?

RUMSEY: No, I felt that if I could make the ridge the fire would stop.

COCHRAN: Had you had any special training on what to do in case of an emergency such as this?

RUMSEY: No, not that I remember in an emergency like that. Had safety training of course and first aid and instructions in firefighting.

GRANGER: Had you been told to follow the leader?

RUMSEY: That's right.

GUSTAFSON: Do you think that if you had understood about Dodge's fire you would have gone into it?

RUMSEY: I think that if I had seen it on a black board and seen it done and had it explained so that I understood I think I surely would have gone in - but of course you never can tell for sure.

GUSTAFSON: You think you would have gone into Dodge's fire if the ridge had been 1500 feet away?

RUMSEY: I don't know.

BLAKE: Did the fellows seem to have been exhausted?

RUMSEY: We were all very tired. I was panting about as hard as I ever had and I noticed Harrison was sitting down - with his pack still on. Don't know why he did not get rid of it. He was very tired. It was smoky at that time.

CROCKER: When you left Dodge's fire could you see any fire above you up Mann Gulch?

RUMSEY: No, I could not - not that I can remember. It was very smoky. I had my eye on ridge and ground in between and I did not look around much.

MAYS: At the point where you dropped tools did you notice how far it was to the ridge?

RUMSEY: No. As I remember it I did not see just where the ridge was. I forgot to mention I could not definitely see where the ridge was from where we were. We kept running up since it had to be there somewhere. Might be 1 1/2 mile or 100 feet - I had no idea. At Dodge's fire we could see it.

GUSTAFSON: Were there several saws in this group?

RUMSEY: Another man and Sallee had saws. I was carrying a water can but Navon relieved me back down the trail and I took his saw.

**TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER ADMINISTRATOR STILLINGS**

GUSTAFSON: For the record, what is your name?

STILLINGS: Fred I. Stillings.

GUSTAFSON: Position with Forest Service?

STILLINGS: In charge of aerial work in Region One.

GUSTAFSON: Does that include all aerial work involving all phases of program?

STILLINGS: That is correct.

GUSTAFSON: Safety, training, selection of personnel, etc.?

STILLINGS: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: I would like to have you provide this board the general picture of your training program involving smokejumper operations both as it relates to suppression of fires, safety, and as it relates to the training in connection with actual smoke jumping operations so if you would give the board the benefit of this information we can proceed from that point.

STILLINGS: That is a pretty large field with us. We have to first of all break it down between the old men and the new men. So-called old men are those who have had previous jumper experience, at least one season prior to beginning of field season to those men we give 2 refresher jumps and brush up on their fire training. It usually takes about 7 to 10 actual work days, somewhat depending on weather, that is why it is indefinite - normally 10 days. The training in addition to strictly fire training and the two refresher jumps also includes a certain amount of conditioning, that is work on the so-called obstacle course and what we call the jump tower and mockup let-down, and the balance of time is put in on fire training. Of the 8 days of training, approximately 38 hours is fire training, the balance is conditioning and jumping. The actual training of these men is handled by our overhead. We have 6 foremen in the smokejumper organization. Then we have Earl Cooley who is our fire technician. Earl, under my supervision, heads up fire training and safety work pertaining to fire training. Jim Waite is parachute technician and heads up jump training. The overhead, the 6 foremen I mention, are the men who actually help them and put on these various classes. Every class is under supervision at this time and is all from standpoint of training. We don't have any special course or special class that we head "safety." The whole training program is safety, particularly the jump training. All the boys realize this and think safety at all times. The squad leaders, last years we had 10 squad leaders in this region, also help with certain phases of the training. Hellman was a squad leader. Dodge is a foreman. The

foreman is a SP-8, the squad leaders SP-7, and smokejumpers SP-6. The squad leader is usually picked for one branch of training. Certain specified training for certain men that in our training outline would be headed "project work," but actually it's power saw training or such work as that.

I don't know whether this group would be interested in the training outline we had for this year or not, but this is it. (Showed a book) First two sheets are for old men what we call group A, and it gives the break-down just roughly and then the training outline for the fire control training is in another book. I is not original. The information here is taken from all sources we had on hand and put together in that form so that all overhead would follow the same outline and would teach the same things, not injecting their own ideas into it.

GUSTAFSON: What is the difference between training given old men and new men?

STILLINGS: New men get about 4 weeks of training. This past season they started training the 15th of June; we had excellent weather all the way through and we completed it with our large fire camp jump on the 8th day of July. That completed the training period. We didn't lose even a part of a day due to weather. Of that training, 54 hours is fire training, the balance is smokejumper training. There again this training is handled the same way, put on by the overhead, Cooley heading up the fire training, White heading up jump training and the foreman and squad leaders assisting.

GRANGER: How much instruction do they get on what to do in a tight situation such as these men faced?

STILLINGS: It always comes up. We don't have any set amount of time for that in our outline but in discussing fires it invariably comes up and it is covered. If you get in a tight place the common methods of evading a hot fire are covered such as cutting back into the burn or trying to flank the fire or reach a break in topography or something like that and it is always to my knowledge stressed that they should follow their foreman, follow the leader, and the best argument we have had to try to put over that point is the fact that so far as we know, since 1910 there has never been a man in Region One burned when he was following the foreman's orders, or the orders of the officer in charge.

MAYS: (Reads from smokejumper training outline book) "During travel carefully choose best routes. Study your map. Identify country with map. Follow instructions and trust your foreman."

GRANGER: Any instruction on escape fires such as Dodge employed here?

STILLINGS: Not to my knowledge. That is a rather unusual situation. We are usually in much more heavily timbered country where such a method of escape wouldn't work.

GUSTAFSON: Do you know of any other situations in which the escape fire had been used?

STILLINGS: I don't personally.

CROCKER: To my knowledge, none in this region. Many times we have had to march back inside the fire. It is very seldom ever possible to set an escape fire with exception of grass lands. Our training here has been to get close to fire and get back inside fire.

GRANGER: Are you pretty well acquainted with Hellman and Dodge?

STILLINGS: Yes, I am.

GRANGER: Have you any opinion as to which one of those men the boys might follow in case there had been any differences in viewpoint as to what to do in emergency?

STILLINGS: No, I can't honestly say. I would not actually rate one above the other. I suppose you refer to leadership?

GRANGER: Either that or because they were more used to working under one than the other.

STILLINGS: I could not answer that. It is possible that because they were more used to one than the other they might. Under our system, with the number of smokejumpers we have, they get to know all the overhead to some extent but it is largely a matter of chance. A certain percentage of this group may have known one better than the other. It is a matter of chance who goes on a given jump. In this region we follow a jump list rotating it to keep up training in their jumping. We had approximately 20 forest school students this year. To get additional forestry training they were placed out on timber work this year and held in reserve but not on the jump list.

GUSTAFSON: In your fire training do you have actual set fires for training purposes?

STILLINGS: That is right. They have set fires for 2-man smoke chaser type fire and step-up method training and on the last day every year we have what we call the mass jump for all old men and new men and we set a good sized fire. We had around an 8-acre fire last spring and they, I think, got some very good instruction and training on that. The training is given at Camp Menard, an old CCC camp.

(May reads some more from safety outline)

STILLINGS: In addition to that we have every year had Ralph space give at least one day on fire behavior and those same things that we have mentioned. Hot fires are covered by Ralph. I know in general what Ralph gives and I know that he covered that from what I got from the other men. Their step-up training is given for crew of 25 men and up.

SETH JACKSON: Is there any danger of a local crew setting a fire and trapping smokejumpers?

STILLINGS: Never had it come up. Our instructions are to the men that when they jump on fire ordinarily they are first on fire and man in charge is fire boss, as it were, until relieved by district ranger or his official representative. While we do not have any safety lectures we do have safety practice and, of course, a first aid course. It is primarily around the type of injuries common to smokejumpers such as injured backs, broken bones, snake bites, etc.

GUSTAFSON: A smokejumper crew leaving a plane and landing on ground - are they Region One men and recognized as a regional office crew or a forest crew and so instructed?

COCHRAN: Do you have any system of assuring that the crew is recognized and taken over by the forest when they land and are known to be responsible to someone or that someone is responsible for them?

STILLINGS: I believe that is thoroughly understood by everyone. Just as soon as the spotter reports to the forest concerned, as was done in this case, at that time that transfers the responsibility to the forest.

PRICE: Who decides when the jumpers will be relieved?

STILLINGS: Their instructions are to stay until released by forest. This is always handled through the supervisor's office.

SETH JACKSON: Do you equip men with a map of the area?

STILLINGS: We had always given maps in all cases but the war made us short on maps and so the boys decided that since they were so short that on the large crew fires they would not need a map to find the fire. We will always have maps from now on. They always have carried maps except on project fires.

MAYS: How many times had jumpers been jumped on Helena National Forest?

STILLINGS: Probably 2 or 3 fires a year and they would largely be on the Lincoln District which is west of the Canyon Ferry District.

HANSON: Regarding selection of overhead for this fire, I happen to know that Fred took special action on this particular fire that he does not on regular fires.

STILLINGS: During periods of high fire danger I try to keep in very close touch with this project and then our overhead is not necessarily jumped in rotation. In general, we try to follow in rotation. Our fire danger was high on August 5. Because of high fire danger, because it already was a class C fire in rough terrain it just seemed good business to pick who I thought were the best men we had to go in charge of this crew and as spotter. That man was Wag Dodge. Sent Earl Cooley to the fire as spotter to bring information on fire back from Helena. I requested that they send those two men for those two purposes.

CROCKER: I overheard the conversation. That required a change in original orders.

GUSTAFSON: Measuring the over-all qualifications of this 16-man crew against qualifications of a 16-man crew such as BRC or other ground crew, would you render as your opinion that this crew was more highly trained or less highly trained?

STILLINGS: Every one of these men had one or more season's experience on a forest and most of them had 3 or 4 years of that in addition. I know what the training is in BRC crews and our training is much more intensified. I don't think there is any question but that they were superior. We have had an average of around 500 applications each year and get 90 old men back and every year we canvass forests for top men and have got good men from the forests to start with even without this training.

GUSTAFSON: In selection of men for smokejumper positions they must have at least one season as smoke chaser-fireman?

STILLINGS: That is right. Earl Cooley and all the men who made this jump had one or more years of service with Forest Service and service with smokejumpers. This information on service of all men is prepared and can be made a part of this record.

GRANGER: You regard Cooley as a thoroughly competent spotter?

STILLINGS: Definitely.

(Granger suggested that experience of men be put in this record.)

STILLINGS: Wag Dodge has approximately 16 seasons of fire experience about 8 of which were with the smokejumpers with exception of less than one year in the armed services.

Bill Hellman, squad leader, had 5 years during which he had experience on at least 4 large fires.

GUSTAFSON: Do you think both were competent to appraise conditions?

STILLINGS: Definitely. As much so as the majority of our fire men in this region. There may be some few in the region who had had 15 or 20 years' more experience and would be classed as experts.

Robert J. Bennett - Army medical Technician from 1945-46. Had three season's experience with Forest Service prior to 1949. This was first year with smokejumpers. Was Forest school student.

Eldon E. Diettert - Had 4 seasons experience with Forest Service on district work. This first year as smokejumper.

Philip R. McVey - Had 3 seasons with Forest Service, 2 of which were served as smokejumper, counting this season.

David R. Navon - Was a first lieutenant in Paratroops, U. S. Army, 1941 to 1946. He was taking forestry at U. of California. Had one season with Forest Service in California. First season as smokejumper.

Leonard L. Piper - Served in U. S. Navy. He had one season of general forest work and this was his first season as smokejumper.

Stanley J. Reba - Served in Army Air Corps, radio operator and gunner 1943-45. Was forestry student at U. of Minnesota. Second season as smokejumper.

Walter B. Rumsey - Served in U. S. Navy 1945-46. Had two seasons general Forest Service experience. One season as smokejumper, this season.

Robert W. Sallee - Had two seasons Forest Service experience and was serving for first season as smokejumper.

Marvin L. Sherman - U.S. Navy, Seaman 2nd Class, 3 seasons Forest Service experience, first season smokejumper.

Joseph B. Sylvia - Served in U. S. Marine Air Corps 1942-45. Three seasons with Forest Service. Second season as smokejumper.

Henry J. Thol, Jr. - Two seasons Forest Service experience and was serving his first year as smokejumper.

Newton R. Thompson - Served in U. S. Army Air Corps 1944-46. Two seasons of general forestry experience. Was serving first season as smokejumper in addition.

Silas R. Thompson - Served in Army Airborne Troops in Japan 1946-48. He had two seasons with smokejumpers, serving second year. No previous experience listed.

GRANGER: That makes 9 first-year smokejumpers and 4 second-year. Is that below average in experience for groups of smokejumpers would you say?

STILLINGS: It would be somewhat as smokejumpers. Average smokejumpers, closer to three fifths of them, are older men.

GRANGER: As to their total experience how would they average out?

STILLINGS: Quite a few of those had a number of years previous experience, and in overall experience would be at least average.

CROCKER: The experience behind this crew was comparable to any ground crew we have in training and years of experience.

BLAKE: In regard to physical condition of these men - we make sure they are physically fit and stand up under their training.

STILLINGS: We now require an annual physical examination for all men working as smokejumpers.

GRANGER: Regarding the extent to which these men were seasoned so that they did not get panicky and would follow their leader in a tight situation, would you say these men were average or above or below?

STILLINGS: I would say they were average in comparison to other smokejumpers. The past few years prior to 1949 have been relatively easy fire years and a fellow could well have had 2, 3, or 4 years' experience on a forest and on a district as a fire man and yet not have gained the experience and the seasoning you ask about.

GUSTAFSON: Wag Dodge with 16 years experience in Forest Service work, much in fire control game, must have had considerable experience on tough fires. Since Cooley started with Forest Service in 1934 that is sufficient lapse of time to cover wide variety of weather conditions, good as well as bad. The two men in charge were men who had considerable experience.

CROCKER: I rather imagine we have rangers and staff officers with much less experience on actual fire lines than these two boys.

HANSON: The Gates-of-the-Mountains area has the reputation of being quite precipitous. We have always given serious consideration to dropping men into this area.

## TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER FOREMAN DODGE

GUSTAFSON: Mr. Dodge is now know to all of us. There is no need to further introduce him here. He has been on the ground with members of the Board, has discussed in detail the actions incident to this operation, and the Board members are very familiar with all the details as Dodge related them on the ground. However, for the purpose of the record I would like to have Mr. Dodge relate in his own words the actions from the time they arrived over the fire until he arrived at Meriwether. I will dispense with questions since he has repeated this story and lived so closely with it for so long. Following the conclusion of your verbal statement, Wag, the Board may feel that they want to ask you a few more questions. If this is agreeable procedure, the floor is yours.

DODGE: We arrived over the fire, which was about 60 acres in size, at 3:10 p.m. Jack Nash called my attention upon sighting the fire in Mann Gulch. I took position in the door of the plane to observe the terrain and characteristics of the fire. The first tentative jump spot on top of the ridge between Mann gulch and Meriwether Creek northeast of patrol point was to considered suitable because of its position in the path of the fire. Another spot was picked in the bottom of the gulch in the vicinity of the head of Mann Gulch. I was concerned over this choice for reasons that if any injuries occurred, it would be almost impossible to get the injured person out. I related this to the spotter, who was Earl Cooley, but I also okayed the spot as suitable to jump to, which was about one-half mile north of the fire.

The fire at this time gave indications that its rate of spread would considerably reduce throughout the evening and night. It was approximately 3:50 p.m. when I looked at my watch upon landing in the jump area. I had an extremely hard landing, and Rumsey came down the hill and helped me off with my jump gear, and I remained there until the rest of the jumpers were down. Hellman reported to me that all the men were okay that had jumped and we accounted for 13 other jumpers. Merle Stratton did not jump.

Our cargo was dropped to us from approximately 5:00 p.m. when all the cargo was retrieved and camp established below the jump area. At that time, I could hear someone hollering over on the fire across the canyon. I left Hellman with the crew to pick up some subsistence and water before starting down the canyon, and left instructions for him to follow me over to the far side of the canyon with the crew. I contacted Harrison, the prevention guard, up on the head of the fire and brought him back to join our crew,

and told Hellman that he should take the crew and return to the northwest side of Mann Gulch and start toward the river grading out of the canyon as he went. Harrison and I returned to our camp area, from where I could see that the fire had started to boil up, and I figured it was necessary to rejoin my crew and try and get out of the canyon as soon as possible.

I caught up with the crew about 5:40 p.m., and had Hellman stop and see that all the crew was together and to remain on the end of the group. We continued down the canyon for approximately five minutes of travel before I could see that the fire had crossed Mann Gulch and was coming up the ridge toward us. I then reversed our direction and started to return to the north, up the northwest side of Mann Gulch, climbing as we went. After traveling approximately 1,000 feet to 1,500 feet, I instructed the crew to drop all heavy equipment. (I did not know until later that they had discarded shovels and pulaskis.) After returning to approximately above our camp area to the west of Mann Gulch, the fire was too close, in my estimation, to continue farther. At this point, I stopped the crew and explained to those nearest me (at least 8 men) that we would have to burn off a section of the light fuel and get into the inside in order to make it through. In my opinion, all my men were still with me or very close and no stampeding was occurring.

After setting a clump of bunch grass on fire, I made an attempt to start another, but the match had gone out and upon looking up, I had an area of 100 feet square that was ablaze. I told the men nearest to me that we would wait a few seconds to give it a chance to burn out inside, and then we would cross through the flames into the burned area, where we could make a good stand and our chances of survival were more than even.

Upon walking around to the north side of the fire I started as an avenue of escape, I heard someone comment with these words, "To hell with this, I am getting out of here!" and for all my hollering, I could not direct anyone into the burned area. I then walked through the flame towards the head of the fire into the inside and continued to holler at everyone who went by, but all failed to heed my instructions; and within seconds after the last man had passed, the main fire hit the area that I was in. This lasted approximately five minutes, and I was able to sit up within the burned area and look at my watch, which indicated 6:10 p.m. At that time, I heard someone holler to the east of me. Upon investigation, I found Sylvia approximately 100 feet below and 150 or 200 feet to the east of my location. He was badly burned, and I moved him to the shelter of a large rock and made him as comfortable as possible by removing his shoes, clearing an area of rocks, and retrieving his canteen. then I told him I would start out for some help. Upon reaching the top of the ridge and starting down the other side, I met Sallee and he told me that they had

Hellman down below on a rock, and that he was badly burned and Rumsey was okay and was staying with him. I went down with Sallee, and we decided there wasn't anything we could do for Hellman, so we left our water, my coat and some other gear, and Sallee and myself started for help.

We had to travel through the burn for approximately 3/4 mile before we got the fire's edge and about 1/2 mile more before we reached the Missouri River. As we were not in possession of maps, compasses or any means of locating ourselves, we were in doubt as to which direction would bring the closest and soonest help. Previous to leaving Missoula we were instructed to make contact with the ground crew which made maps, etc., unnecessary. Therefore, we placed our shovel upright on the shore nearest the canyon we came down and tied a bandana handkerchief around the handle. Then we both took up for Elkhorn Creek, as we had noticed a ranch approximately three or four miles up the creek. Upon starting up Elkhorn Creek, we decided to leave the road and go up on the edge of the bench so we would be more noticeable if a search party had been sent out.

About that time, we sighted two motor boats off the mouth of the gulch we came down. We started back towards the river, signaling with our flashlight as we went, but could not attract attention of either one. This gave us indications that there must be a boat club or some other source of transportation from where we were. I was aware that we could not travel too far up the river because of rock ledges descending into the water but was fortunate enough to hear a dog bark across the river, just below Mann Gulch, and we hollered and signaled across and got a response from a party that was observing the fire from that point. We requested him to take us to the nearest point of communication, and by approximately 9:00 p.m. we were at Meriwether Station where my information was relayed to the outside and Ranger Jansson.

About 11:00 p.m. I directed four boats from Meriwether to the gulch above the mouth of Elkhorn Creek and returned to Meriwether. The next day (August 6) was spent in locating the bodies of the men in the burned area. August 7 was a continuance of this work, since three bodies remained unlocated. They were located late in the morning.

GUSTAFSON: Are there any questions the Board members would like to ask at this time?

MAYS: I have one point. When you were providing the escape fire, did you use a bunch of grass to help get it started or just a "go-for" match?

DODGE: A "go-for" match is all that started the fire. One large clump of grass is all that was started.

GRANGER: Did you feel pretty certain that each member of the crew - both those that were with you when you started the fire and those who came up after you started it - understood your purpose in lighting the fire and your desire that they get into it with you?

DODGE: I think they understood my desire for them to get inside - at least those who were right around me, I don't know about the others. Other than what I told them about our chances of survival in there, I doubt very much whether they understood - doubt if they were taught what a burned area would do for survival.

GRANGER: When you say "the others," do you mean those in the rear?

DODGE: Yes.

GRANGER: When they came up did they understand you?

DODGE: I don't think there was too much noise at that time, and since Sallee and Rumsey could hear me 250 to 300 yards away, I am sure those just 50 yards away could understand.

GRANGER: You think they understood?

DODGE: I think they couldn't help but understand. I told them to get matches and start lighting it, but there was no response - no effort made on anyone else's part.

GRANGER: Did you get the impression that those two men heard you?

DODGE: Pretty much that impression.

GRANGER: After the fire you found these men - Sallee and Rumsey, Sylvia and Hellman? Did you at that time know what had happened to the rest of the crew?

DODGE: I had a fair idea. I didn't think any of them had made the ridge.

GRANGER: You didn't think any of them made the ridge?

DODGE: I didn't think any of them were still alive.

COCHRAN: Was there any spoken response to your request that they get in the fire with you? Nobody else made any comments?

DODGE: No comments were made.

COCHRAN: If you had had your radio in good condition at the time you jumped, what would have done - would you have cached it and left it until you got your emergency work done or made some other use of it?

DODGE: The radio would have been with us. As circumstances turned out, it probably wouldn't have been put in use until after the fire had gone over.

COCHRAN: When you went up to meet Harrison, was the fire pretty hot where he was at that time?

DODGE: There was quite a bit of heat on the front, but there wasn't any large amount of spread at that time. It was burning pretty thoroughly around the edges, but there was not enough wind to make it spread.

COCHRAN: But burning hot enough so that it was distinctly the head of the fire at that time?

DODGE: Yes. It was almost impossible to get within 100 feet of the actual burning area itself.

MAYS: I understand when you met Hellman and the crew, when you and Harrison were together coming back, that you instructed them then not to go to the fire but to go out to the river. I think they all understood that -- that they were heading for the river and might possibly attack from the rear. But as you caught up with them and traveled with them a ways and you saw that the fire was across on the north side of Mann Gulch, you made the decision to reverse your route of travel and go back. Was there any conversation with the crew at that time or between then and the time that you asked them to drop their tools, about the spot you might be in? I wonder if they realized the seriousness of it along about that point, or did they just think you were changing direction or route of travel? Was there any conversation with the crew or with Hellman?

DODGE: There was no conversation with anybody until we got to where we dropped the tools on the ridge.

MAYS: At that time did you explain it was getting pretty hot behind you? What reason did you give for dropping the tools?

DODGE: It wasn't necessary. You could see the fire pretty close, and we had to increase our rate of travel some way or another.

MAYS: You think they were all impressed at that time by the urgency of getting out of there?

DODGE: I think they were. Most of those fellows had never been on a fire. I didn't know what their individual impressions were of the fire.

MAYS: Did you say that they dropped all their tools?

DODGE: They were all dropped right there.

GRANGER: Where were you heading for?

DODGE: I was heading back toward the light fuel area and the grass area.

GRANGER: You were taking what you thought was the shortest course to get over the ridge and get far enough from the fire to make it out safely?

DODGE: I felt it was the most logical place to be, away from the heat, off the other side of the canyon. It gave us the greatest distance from the heavy timber across the canyon and at high enough elevation.

GRANGER: Why didn't you take right up the slope from where you were?

DODGE: It was very rocky and the direction of the fire at that time made it pretty much of a toss-up whether we would have made the ridge top.

GRANGER: When you decided, after coming back from meeting Harrison, to take the crew back down to the river, why did you select a route along the side of the slope instead of going right down in the bottom of the gulch?

DODGE: For the reason we could observe the fire on the other side of the canyon. You couldn't see what was taking place from the bottom of the canyon.

GRANGER: You mean from the standpoint of safety?

DODGE: Yes.

GUSTAFSON: In your prepared statement dated August 10 you stated in part "I figured it was necessary to rejoin my crew and get out of the canyon as soon as possible." Did you have any other purpose in mind aside from getting out of the canyon as soon as possible.

DODGE: Yes, getting out of the canyon was primary purpose at this time, however, it also was my intention once out of the canyon to size up the fire and if possible to attack the fire from the rear or along the Mann Gulch flank.

PRICE: You say that there might well have been a lack of understanding on the part of the men as to the technique of setting a safety fire.

DODGE: Yes. I doubt if any of them have ever been in any conditions that required any action to save their lives, and practically all being young fellows and light fire seasons (the past few years), I don't think they have ever been up against a critical situation.

PRICE: So far as you know, it had never been explained to them?

DODGE: I don't know what they were taught in training.

MAYS: I would like to ask if Dodge had ever done that before --  
lighted an escape fire?

DODGE: No, I never have had to use an escape fire before. I have been  
run off of big fires.

MAYS: It was just your knowledge of fire behavior that told you that  
was a good thing to do?

DODGE: Yes. The type of burning on the advancing main fire  
necessitated going back through 250 to 300 feet of practically  
solid flame to get to the burned area.

MAYS: Had you ever been instructed in setting an escape fire?

DODGE: Not that I know of. It just seemed the logical thing to do. I  
had been instructed if possible to get into a burned area.

GRANGER: At the point where you reversed your direction and started  
back up the slope, as I recall it on the ground, there was quite a  
sizeable, fairly open place there with about the same kind of  
grass cover as where you set the escape fire. Did you consider at  
all at that time of making your stand there and burning off an  
area and getting into it?

DODGE: No, I did not at that time. I didn't think it was absolutely  
necessary at that time to take preventive action so we started  
back toward lighter fuel area and principally away from the heavy  
timber on the other side of the draw which if it blew up would  
make it very hot at this location. It was very narrow down there  
and a heavy timber stand across the canyon. It was quite low down  
in there at that point.

GUSTAFSON: When you made that turn and started back to the ridge, did  
you feel any overly great fear that you couldn't get away from  
that fire? Did it enter your mind that your crew may be in  
danger.

DODGE: Yes, there was some doubt if we were cut off whether we would  
make it back to the ridge top.

GUSTAFSON: How great was the doubt?

DODGE: We still had 150 to 200 or more yards head start on the fire,  
and if the wind direction had changed it would have been of great  
concern.

GUSTAFSON: When you went up the north flank of the little fire you set  
and you were hollering to the boys as they went by, did any of  
them look your way as they went by?

DODGE: They didn't seem to pay any attention. That is the part that I  
didn't understand. They seemed to have something on their minds -  
all headed in one direction.

GUSTAFSON: Did you holler after you had entered your escape fire to any of the fellows?

DODGE: Yes, I did.

GUSTAFSON: Did they turn their heads and see you inside you own fire?

DODGE: There was a small haze after they went by my fire. I couldn't distinguish which direction they were looking after they had gone by.

GUSTAFSON: Now the crew was fairly strung out, as I understand it, at that time - they weren't all in a bunch at the time you set the escape fire?

DODGE: They were about 150 feet from the tail end to where I set the fire.

GRANGER: Is it your opinion that practically all the members of the crew either heard that remark that you quoted or saw the individual who made the remark taking off up the hill?

DODGE: I don't know whether they heard. That would be questionable. But, it is obvious they saw the rest of them take off because it was clear and they could see all the way through the direction they took from where we came out of the timber. There was nothing to obstruct their vision.

GRANGER: Do you think they all saw the individual who made that remark was going up the hill?

DODGE: It could have been that.

COCHRAN: Were you in the lead when you started that fire?

DODGE: Yes, I was at the head. The rest all had to pass by.

JACKSON: Where was Hellman?

DODGE: He was up there with me.

HANSON: Where had you told him to be?

DODGE: At the foot of the line.

HANSON: When did you tell him to be there?

DODGE: When I caught up with the crew.

MAYS: I don't suppose it would be easy to remember, but when these men were going by you after you entered the escape fire; someone of course was at the tail end. Did you have any idea how far from the escape fire they got before the main fire caught them?

DODGE: I had no idea who was on the tail end. I didn't know their names to apply to their faces.

MAYS: Do you have any idea how far beyond the escape fire they would get at rate they were traveling in the time that elapsed before the main fire hit them?

DODGE: They had approximately 30 seconds.

MAYS: It would have been less than 150 yards?

DODGE: I would say 100 yards, not more than that.

SPACE: Did you see the fire that was ahead of you to the right?

DODGE: Yes, I did when I came out of the timber. I could see the head of the canyon was ablaze.

MAYS: Where was this fire in relation to the camp area?

DODGE: It was just above the camp area and to the right of the camp. That is where it started from -- the furthest spot to the right, and it was burning clear around almost to the ridge top.

COCHRAN: How well acquainted with these men personally were you? Had you ever worked with them before on a fire?

DODGE: No, I hadn't.

COCHRAN: Did you know them all by name so that you could call them?

DODGE: Three of them in the outfit I actually knew; Hellman, McVey and Thol.

COCHRAN: The others were really strangers?

DODGE: That is right.

GRANGER: Do you have any knowledge as to whether Hellman was better acquainted with the men and they with him than you?

DODGE: I think he was. He had been out on more fires with them.

**TESTIMONY OF RANGER JANSSON**  
**Relating to the Rescue Operations**

GUSTAFSON: We can either make this long or brief. Ranger Jansson had previously brought his testimony up to the time that he received information at Meriwether that a tragedy had occurred. That was at the time that Sallee and Dodge arrived from down the river. I wonder how detailed we want to go into this - the accident had already occurred. Do we want to just go into the general rescue operations to determine how they were handled in the early stages, or do we want all the details? It is my feeling that we should just get the pertinent information that is essential to obtain a clear picture of the early rescue work. We also want to determine whether or not some factual information was obtained from the two survivors - Hellman and Sylvia.

PRICE: I think we would want a pretty clear picture up to the time that aid was rendered to those that were still alive. From then on, just a general picture.

GUSTAFSON: Let's proceed in that fashion. May we have a brief, chronological story of what transpired.

JANSSON: I might state here that this hour between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. we were on the air and so was the Missoula radio station, trying to contact the jumper's radio, and when they weren't able to contact the jumpers' between the hours of 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. to do the same thing and had been unable to contact them. They put out a call on all frequencies, because we didn't know whether the jumpers came in on 3195 or 3445 frequency. I was in the process of getting the jump spot when Wag Dodge walked into the radio shack and told me that he had two men injured. I had quite a lot of difficulty in getting his story, because he was pretty badly broken up by his experience. By this time there were a lot of men around trying to get in on what was going on, so I took Wag up the trail where I could get him by himself. I still wasn't able to determine just exactly what had happened. Before going up the trail with him, I did find out from him that the men were burned. He had asked for a doctor and two litters. I said they'd better have plasma if men were burned. So I included plasma in the order which I sent at that time.

In the meantime, I was concerned about Hersey because I figured he had had enough time to get my message and bring his men down. When he didn't show up then, I was the only man who knew the country. In the meantime, I asked Don Roos to choose the pick of the men we had for the rescue party, and asked Wag if the men had water. He said they did have a water supply. There was nothing we could do until we got plasma to them. I decided not

to send out a party until the doctors got there for no body but myself knew the country, I wanted to make sure the doctors arrived at the injured men. I decided to do something about Hersey and his crew. It was apparent that the fire was now more serious than we thought; I was beginning to become convinced we had lost men up on the ridge too. I picked out a man I thought I could trust, to go up and investigate Hersey's condition. About that time, Hersey walked in. Prior to Hersey's arrival, I sent out another message concerning the doctors, wanting a confirmation to make sure that they had been sent. The Missoula radio at that point intercepted my conversation with Canyon Ferry and wanted to know the names of the survivors and the injured men. Dodge was unable to give me the name of Sylvia. He stammered around on the letter "S" but couldn't recall the name in his condition at that time, Sallee, not having seen who the man was, didn't know his name; so I sent out the report that Dodge, Sallee, Rumsey uninjured, Hellman burned as was one other unidentified man, and we had 11 men missing. Upon Hersey's arrival I asked if he was injured. He said no. I asked if he had 19, and he said yes, he had all his men but he thought Jimmy (Harrison) got burned up in the fire. Sallee then told me that Harrison had joined their group and that one of their men had not jumped. By that time we had our rescue operation planned out. I told Hersey to take over the fire, that he should keep track of all the men and not let any of them stray away; and that we would consider the rescue operation the number one job, and if the fire interfered with that, we would have to let the fire go. About this time, a report came from down river where there were a number of boat club members observing the fire below from the mouth of Elkhorn, that there were injured men down the river waiting to be picked up.

COCHRAN: What time?

JANSSON: About twenty minutes after 10:00 p.m. I told Don Roos to hold the rescue party at Meriwether until the doctors arrived, and that I would go down river and check on the report. Since Dodge told me he had come down Mann Gulch I told Roos I would meet him at the mouth of Mann Gulch when the doctors arrived. I got a boat club member to take me down river in a speed boat and spent some time patrolling the shore, searching for anybody that might be along shore. We cut the motor of the boat and hollered and yelled and used the flashlights and the searchlight that was on the boat. After we had made about two trips up and down the shore, a speed boat arrived with the two doctors in it. I transferred to their boat and landed them at Mann Gulch. In the meantime the big boat with the rescue party came down river, and we discovered that Mann Gulch was not the right gulch. The boys had come down the gulch we now call Rescue Gulch. So I loaded up the doctors again and took them further on down river and landed at the mouth of Rescue Gulch. A strong down river wind was blowing and we couldn't land the big boat there. Consequently, we had to shuttle the men back and forth with the smaller

speedboat. We finally got all the men ashore and proceeded to organize and fix all the equipment. It was then I discovered that the doctors had left the litters at Hilger, so we dispatched a speedboat to Hilger Landing to pick up the litters. I refused to split the party, since the fire area was still dangerous, and I wanted to keep track of every man that we had to make sure that we didn't have any accidents; also I didn't want to break up into two parties, since the second party would be unfamiliar with the country.

PRICE: Approximately how big was the rescue party?

JANSSON: Twelve men, including the doctors and myself and Sallee.

MAYS: Dodge wasn't with you?

JANSSON: Dodge was unable to travel. He was pretty well done in at that point.

It took about 15 minutes to get the litters. We lined the men up, gave each man a place in line, and then I had Don Roos call the roll. I found I had some kibitzers in the crowd, so I sent them back and asked one boat to stay in the mouth of Rescue Gulch for the duration of the night. I also asked Harvey Jensen, boat operator for the boat club, to see that somebody patrolled the river during the night. We then walked up Rescue Gulch, crossed into the fire and continued on up towards where Bill Hellman was supposed to be. We got about two thirds of the way when we heard a man shout. When we got up to him, we found it was Walter Rumsey, who said that Hellman had run out of water and he was on his way down to the river to get a fresh supply. I knew Walt Rumsey, and he told me that he didn't think my man Harrison had gotten through the fire. He said he was too worn out. I questioned him as to whether there were any other survivors, and he said he didn't know of any. He also told me at that point that if they had done as Dodge had instructed, then they wouldn't have had any trouble.

GRANGER: Who told you that?

JANSSON: Rumsey.

COCHRAN: Did he make any detailed comments, or just that one passing remark?

JANSSON: He made the following comment, "The Lord was good to me - he put wings on my feet, and I ran like hell." He said behind him and Sallee, was Diertert. Walt thought Diertert had gotten over the ridge.

COCHRAN: He didn't make any further comment about Dodge lighting the fire and telling them to get in it?

JANSSON: He explained the action Dodge had taken. I think all he said was that if they had gotten in Dodge's fire, they would have been all right.

GRANGER: Yesterday you heard him testify. He said that he did not hear Dodge give any instructions when he set the escape fire, and he wasn't sure whether he understood the purpose of the Dodge fire, but he made his own free choice to go on over the ridge. Is there any conflict between that and what you have quoted him as saying at this later time?

JANSSON: I don't believe so. He had had a conversation with Dodge after the fire had gone over, and I suppose Dodge had told him how he had gotten through the fire.

GRANGER: Then he was expressing an opinion based on later understanding of what Dodge was trying to do?

JANSSON: I believe that is right. Earlier in the evening, Dodge told me that their cargo had been widely scattered, and they had spent so much time picking it up that by the time they got ready to do anything, the fire was on its way. I understood him to say then that immediately when they left the camp they figured they had to get down river as soon as possible.

We got up to Bill Hellman at 12:35 a.m. Rumsey, Sallee and I got there first. We were taking the water up there since Bill needed a drink. We could hear Bill hollering at us almost a half mile down the gulch. When we got up there and gave him a drink, it took about 15 minutes for the doctors to arrive, and they immediately went to work on Bill, gave him a hypo, plasma and salve on his burns, put him in a litter, and made him as comfortable as he could be on a rocky sidehill. About that time, I began to think of the man on the other side, and I asked Rumsey if he had been over to see him. Rumsey said he didn't know there was another man on the other side of the hill. So I took Don Roos and Sallee and went over the top of the ridge, telling the rest of the party that we would send for them after we found Sylvia.

COCHRAN: You didn't know who it was at that time?

JANSSON: No. We got across the ridge at 1:20 a.m. and went right through the little gap in the rocks - the only place in the night we could find to go through - and spread out on the north side of Mann Gulch near the top of the ridge and started to yell, looking for the injured man. Don Roos and Sallee went to the west and I went to the east. The up drafts were brings a very suspicious smell at intervals along that ridge. It made it difficult to determine whether there was a series of bodies lying there or whether we were smelling just Sylvia. The wind was tricky and we could smell just now and then. I imagine we had searched about 30 minutes when

we heard a faint cry below us - we had come back and met and were starting another series of contours lower down. I believe Sylvia must have been unconscious during part of this period and had probably regained consciousness and heard us yelling. We found him standing on a big rock, hunched over facing down hill. When we definitely had located his position, I sent Sallee to get the doctors. Roos and I went down to Sylvia. His first comment was, "Say, it didn't take you long to get here!" I told him I thought we were plenty slow. He said, "Well, it must be about 5 o'clock in the morning," and I said it was 2:00 a.m. on the nose. I had my notebook and put the time down and asked him what his name was. He told me it was Joe Sylvia. Then he asked us not to look at his face because he thought it was pretty badly burned. We kidded him and told him he was as good looking as he ever was. He said he didn't think he could walk down out of there, and I told him he didn't need to worry about that - we were going to give him a ride. We got him to sit down, and he showed me his hands, which were charred clubs. We gave him a drink. I don't think Sylvia had had any water during the night. He was unable to raise the canteen to his lips. He didn't seem to be in as great pain as Hellman, but he was still looking for the doctor to come and give him a hypo. We peeled him an orange and fed it to him. He said he was cold, but we had already given our jackets away. We stripped off our shirts and wrapped them around him. Then Don sat on one side and I sat on the other, and we hugged there until the doctors came.

GUSTAFSON: In your previous statement about this point you stated that Sylvia made some statement about this fire.

JANSSON: He told me that if he had followed Dodge's instructions, he wouldn't have gotten hurt.

GUSTAFSON: Did he further elaborate on that?

JANSSON: No. Joe told me he thought he had heard voices below him earlier in the evening. He thought probably his pal Reba was down below. We did quite a bit of hollering and made short trips out from Joe after the doctors arrived in an attempt to find anybody else. The doctors arrived probably about 2:20 a.m. and treated Sylvia the same as Hellman. During the night several of the men who made short trips out reported smelling burned flesh around on the hillside. I asked the doctors about starting out immediately with Sylvia. They said it would be all right to wait till daylight - that at this stage of the game it wouldn't endanger his life to wait until morning. Since the hillside was steep, there were lots of falling snags, and rocks rolling, I thought it would be best to wait until daylight before letting the litters go downhill. Shortly after daylight, which came a little after 4:00 a.m., I spread out the litter bearers for Sylvia along the hillside to see if we couldn't locate any other survivors or bodies.

I had walked only a few feet from Sylvia when I ran into Harrison's body, which I easily identified because of his Forest Service key, snake bite kit which I had given him when he had come down to Meriwether, his glasses and his Catholic medallion. I put a note by his body saying that this was Jim Harrison, and that I had identified him and put the time down. I left that note right by his hand. Since Rumsey had told me that Harrison was tired out, I assumed that we would find the balance of the men on the other side of the pass. Roos and I crossed the pass and searched the other side. We could find no evidence of any bodies or other survivors. So I told Hellman's litter bearers to start down Rescue Gulch. I then crossed over the ridge again and simultaneously a number of us spotted another body. We went down to the body and Sallee identified him as Robert Bennett. We then tagged his body with the information as to who he was and that he had been identified by Sallee.

GUSTAFSON: I wonder if it is necessary for this purpose to go into this in detail.

JANSSON: We then went downhill with Sylvia's litter and discovered Reba, tagged his body. We got down to the mouth of Mann Gulch around 6:00 a.m. and sent Joe on into the hospital. I stopped at Meriwether and ordered a plane flight to scout the fire, division boss for the Willow Creek division, 16 men for a rescue party, and gave the order that Mann Gulch was no longer suitable for a camp - that it should be moved to Elkhorn.

GRANGER: At this time were the rest of the rescue party searching for the rest of the crew?

JANSSON: No, we had to carry the rest of those men out.

MAYS: Did Hellman go down at the same time that Sylvia did?

JANSSON: Just about. I then talked to Dodge in camp, and we discussed possible means of continuing the search. He suggested a helicopter, so I arranged a remote for him to Stillings in Missoula and he talked direct to Stillings and ordered the helicopter and two walkie-talkies. At that time we gave the landing spot for the helicopter as the mouth of Elkhorn. This was about 6:30 a.m.

GRANGER: At this time did you have any other men at Meriwether who might have been sent in to scout?

JANSSON: The men had been up all night and it was decided that what we needed was a fresh crew in there, because this was liable to last all day and probably another day besides, and since most of these men had either been working all night, or the first firefighters had left camp at 3:30 a.m., there weren't too many men left at camp that would be reliable for this

kind of a job. Since we had talked about the helicopter and were promised that helicopter by 9:00 a.m., that offered us the quickest way of covering the country. If we gathered up men and led them back up in there, it is doubtful that we would have made better time than the helicopter which was due to arrive at 9:00 a.m. That seemed the best plan of action, so Dodge and I got 25 lunches and about 12 gallons of water, and proceeded to the spot where the helicopter was to land. In the meantime, Clarence Strong had arrived, and I spent some time with him on the fire. I asked him to take over the Willow Creek division, since the Meriwether division was organized for the day. Dodge and I arrived at the helicopter landing some time before 9:00 a.m. and then proceeded to sweat it out until 12:40 p.m. in the afternoon. Some place along the line the helicopter orders had gotten snafued. Before that time, I sent messages back to find out what had happened, and I was then convinced that even if we had any survivors left, they would be dead from having to wait in the heat of the day that way. I was also convinced before I left the hill at daylight that there were no survivors. I landed up in the pass by the helicopter about 1 p.m. and started to make my way back to Harrison's body. About the time I got to where I though I was getting close to Harrison, I ran into Henry Thol, Jr.'s body and at the same time, Dr. Little was landed in the pass. I waited in the pass until the helicopter brought Dodge in. Rescue operations continued along the same lines that have been discussed until P. D. Hanson arrived.

PRICE: How long before all the bodies were found?

JANSSON: Nine bodies were found that afternoon (on Saturday), and I didn't find Diettert's body, although I walked right by it a number of times.

PRICE: They were all accounted for that night except one?

JANSSON: No, I reported nine bodies found, two still missing. I had observed the remains of Silas Thompson, but had never walked down to positively identify the remains as a body. Therefore, I did not count him as being found because I figured when the 16 men arrived that it would be cleared up. Since there were no other landings by the helicopter, about 5 p.m. I headed down with Dodge and Little to find out what had happened to our rescue operations. I learned that the helicopter had run out of gas and had to return to Helena. A lightning storm delayed its return from Helena.

COCHRAN: You reported some lost 10:00 p.m. of the previous evening and the six again in the morning?

JANSSON: I reported no dead in the evening, just two men injured, three accounted for and eleven missing. That was about 9:30 p.m. I sent that message direct to Missoula. They asked me about what the situation was and the nature of the injuries and whether there were any missing, the names of those that were safe.

COCHRAN: You didn't talk to the Helena at that time?

JANSSON: No, there was no way of talking to Helena. There is no radio at Helena. I assumed that Canyon Ferry was listening to the conversation with Missoula, but they never received the message at Canyon Ferry. Apparently they were busy with other fire work and missed that message. Shortly after 6:00 a.m. I had also sent out a message saying we had gotten Sylvia and Hellman down off the hill and on the way to the hospital, we had found three bodies, that I was sending the names of these boys in by special confidential message because everyone in the country was listening to us on our shortwave.

COCHRAN: Strong arrived at what time?

JANSSON: Somewhere around 7:00 a.m.

COCHRAN: Is that the only help that arrived from the outside?

JANSSON: He was the first one from Missoula to arrive at the Meriwether camp. However, the Willow Creek division was already being organized by Jack Curtiss of the Beaverhead. He got in there the night before. He was one of the sector bosses that had been ordered the night before, and he took over the Willow Creek division. Other help was arriving about that same time. Dillard from the Lolo arrived with the sector boss unit. We retained him on the line. Since we had ordered more doctors in the morning and litters and plasma, so that in case there were any survivors, we would be prepared for them, that was one reason we waited for the helicopter - because there was nothing we could do for them at that stage if they were alive.

PRICE: Where were the other doctors?

JANSSON: They had gone out with Hellman and Sylvia.

PRICE: When was it that all men were accounted for?

JANSSON: The next morning.

GRANGER: I would like to go back a little. This question involves two or three people here. According to Eaton yesterday, he flew over the fire about 4:15 p.m. and the fire at that time was on the ridge. I didn't make a note here as to whether you said that there was evidence of blow-up at that time or not. Would you mind repeating your statement as to that aspect of it?

EATON: When we left the fire I looked back at it and saw a spot fire northeast of the main fire that was flaming at that time, and the fire had increased considerably in the area from when I first saw it.

GRANGER: It was not across Mann Gulch at that time?

EATON: No, it wasn't down to the bottom of the gulch at all, but was

still pretty much along the ridge and into the timber on the Mann Gulch side of the ridge, but wasn't down the Mann Gulch slope very far.

GRANGER: Later you contacted Jansson and Moir at Meriwether, and you stated that you did not inform them that you knew that the jumpers had landed, and apparently neither one of them asked you about that, although they knew you had flown over the fire.

JANSSON: We didn't know he had flown over the fire.

MOIR: I knew it.

GRANGER: It seems a little odd to me that information was not communicated to Moir and Jansson at that time. Why didn't you tell those men you had been over the fire and knew the jumpers had landed and were in there?

EATON: I mentioned to Moir that I had flown over the fire, but didn't mention the jumpers. I assumed everyone understood that the jumpers were there. I didn't think there was any question but that they knew the jumpers were there on the fire.

GRANGER: Jansson, you knew that the jumpers had been ordered. Can you recall why you didn't inquire of Eaton as to whether he had flown over the fire and what he knew about the jumpers?

JANSSON: It never occurred to me that he had flown over the fire because he was with Apgar that day and I didn't even think to ask him why he had come to Mann Gulch. I assumed that he just thought there was a big fire there and was coming to see what could be done about it.

GUSTAFSON: When were you relieved of the rescue operations?

JANSSON: I don't know that there was any particular time I was relieved of it - it just worked that way. When I got to Meriwether and checked on what had happened and why we didn't have anybody else up on the hill, I was informed that 16 jumpers had arrived from Missoula and were on their way up there, and that Mr. Hanson was looking after that end of it. I felt there was nothing that could be done that night. The next morning however, after talking again with Dodge, we ordered 20 fresh men to search the hillside, and we also ordered 50 hot lunches to be dropped up in the pass at noon at the helicopter landing, so that the 20 men we were sending in and the 16 men who were already up there would have a hot meal at noon.

GUSTAFSON: Did you continue with rescue operations until the last body was brought out?

JANSSON: I kept in touch with it until men from the rescue operation told me they had found the last body.

PRICE: When was that, approximately?

JANSSON: About 10:00 a.m., August 7.

**TESTIMONY OF SUPERVISOR MOIR**  
**Relating to the Rescue Operations**

GUSTAFSON: Jansson has provided us with a rather detailed story concerning his activities in connection with the rescue operations. I believe it won't be necessary for you to go into this as much because the story has been presented in great detail. However, you did, I understand, participate to a considerable extent in the rescue work, and I would like to have you relate to the Board your actions in connection with the rescue work following your receipt of information that a tragedy had occurred.

MOIR: I really didn't participate to a very great extent in the rescue work because I didn't realize there was any rescue work necessary. All the information we had in Helena was that shortly after 9 p.m. the dispatcher in our office received the statement that two jumpers had been injured and that they needed doctors and litters and plasma, and those were immediately dispatched. As I told you in my testimony yesterday, that information didn't reach me until an hour later, and when I checked with the hospital I discovered that the doctors and the plasma and litters had already been sent sometime before down the river, and that it was too late for me to accompany them.

COCHRAN: Did that message come from Missoula?

MOIR: No, through Canyon Ferry from Jansson at Meriwether.

COCHRAN: I understood Jansson to say that he couldn't get through to Helena.

MOIR: He couldn't get through direct. We relayed through the Canyon Ferry Ranger Station. They had a radio and they phoned in to our office. We had no information as to the nature of the injuries or that anyone had been burned until 7 a.m. the next morning. Apparently that information did come into Missoula while it didn't come to us. So, following my call to the hospital and my inability to join the doctors, we tried to get through to Meriwether via Canyon Ferry and were unable to make any contact and get more details in regard to what had happened. I started Lowthian, our road foreman out with another 30 men very shortly after I talked to the hospital and headed them down the river for Hilger Landing - shortly after 10 p.m. However, the boat situation was such that they never were able to get through to Meriwether until 3 a.m. Boats were all congregated down the river, all curious and interested in what was going on at that time, and we had no way of getting in touch with them. Then immediately following that I talked to Clayton Crocker in Missoula. He asked me if I didn't need some strong overhead, and I told him I did. He told me that he would bring some over and come himself. I didn't relate to you in detail the numerous actions I took in manning the fire yesterday before this time, but about

the first thing I did after coming back from up the river was to contact our volunteer fireman squad at Wolf Creek. I discovered that they had already left for the Willow Creek side of the fire, so I knew there were some 50 men in there on that edge. The point I am trying to bring out is that if Wag Dodge had not seen the boat lights and had gone on in the direction of Elkhorn that he originally started in when he came down with Sallee of the fire, that he would have run into that crew. However, there was no communication over there either. The nearest telephone line is Wolf Creek, which only is 16 miles but over a very tough road.

GRANGER: Where was this crew, did you say, that he would have run into?

MOIR: They were on Elkhorn. In fact, they put in about six miles of line that night on that side of the fire.

GRANGER: Did you go to the fire area then yourself?

MOIR: I did not.

GRANGER: Not at any stage of the fire or rescue operations?

MOIR: Not until morning. About that same time (sometime after 11 p.m.), Jack Curtiss and his men from the Beaverhead had arrived, and I lined them up and sent them out also to the Willow Creek side.

GRANGER: Were you acting as sort of dispatcher at Helena at that time, or was Murphy still on the job?

MOIR: Mruphy was on the job; but that is actually the case - yes (that he, Moir, too was assisting with dispatching). There were so many details that Murphy could not handle.

GUSTAFSON: Eaton at this time had proceeded to the York fire?

MOIR: Yes.

COCHRAN: What impression did you get from the message that came in about 9 p.m. the evening of the fifth that presumably was rather indistinct - hazy - and did you have to make up your own mind as to its significance?

MOIR: The message we got was that there were two smokejumpers injured, and we thought it implied just what is said.

JANSSON: I didn't put out anything about the boys until I was requested to. I thought it shouldn't go over the air.

CROCKER: I have a copy of the record, and a radio operator or someone did mention the burned (jumpers) because our report at 9:33 was an interception that our monitor picked up here. "Radio Station to Fite. Got message from fire camp to Canyon Ferry. Fire blew up and burned 2 jumpers - may be others caught in fire." So, someone at Meriwether did mention it over the air.

COCHRAN: That was relayed back to Helena?

CROCKER: Yes. He (the monitor) called me and I called Moir to find out about it. That was at 10:45 p.m. that I finally got the wire. "Crocker to Moir. Has no dope on injuries, except 2 men hurt. Doesn't know if burned - will get data and call Fite. Has 2 sections on fire in upper fire; 600 - 800 acres in Meriwether fire that jumpers were on. Has 300 men. I questioned overhead. Will round up more and get rolling." So, you are correct, Dunc, in saying that you had no knowledge of their being burned, because it was recorded that way.

MOIR: You didn't say anything to me about their being burned either.

CROCKER: You said you didn't know about it but would get data and call collect.

GRANGER: When was it that you learned of the fact that these men were burned and that there may have been others lost in the fire?

MOIR: About 7 a.m. Hanson, Crocker, Strong, and DeJarnette arrived in Helena about 3 a.m. I had already ordered a plane at 5:30 a.m. to make a flight over both fires. I think Crocker asked me what dope we had on the fires and what shape we were in. I told him that I really didn't know, and that we had a plane on order and that he and Hanson could accompany me on the flight at that time. Then Crocker told me he was going to send Strong right down on the fire, which was done, and by that time we had another 60 or 70 men who had been recruited in Butte during the night to go with him, and I think the Lolo overhead went at the same time.

GRANGER: When did you learn what had happened on the fire with respect to the men that had been burned?

MOIR: I think the next thing I recall was the Hanson asked me if I knew what had happened to these two men who were hurt. Apparently he didn't know they were burned. I called the hospital two or three times within an hour to see whether the men had come in and whether they could give us any dope on them. The hadn't arrived so of course we didn't get any information on them. There was some discussion between Crocker and myself. He stated that he thought he would go down on the fire as soon as we got back from the plane ride and that Hanson would take over any rescue operation that was needed. I am not sure just when we had this discussion.

HANSON: It was after we got back (from the plane trip).

PRICE: When did you make your plane flight?

MOIR: A little later, I think, than we planned.

HANSON: At 6 a.m.

MOIR: We got back to my office at 7 a.m., and when we came in the door, Hoell, my executive assistant, handed me this note, which is the first information that I had as to the fact that anybody had been burned or killed. This was at 7:30 a.m., August 6. "A. D. Moir. Found bodies of Robert Bennett, James O. Harrison, a Helena man, and one tentatively identified as Stanley J. Reba. /s/ J. R. Jansson. Search continuing."

GRANGER: When did you go down to the area?

MOIR: I went down with Pete Hanson and Clayton Crocker at 10:15 a.m., August 6. We went to Meriwether where we ran into Sallee and Rumsey, and I was present while they were interrogated by Hanson and Crocker. That really was the first information we had as to the extent of the accident. From there we proceeded to the mouth of Elkhorn where we found Ranger Jansson and Wag Dodge and Dr. Little and the helicopter waiting. First, Jansson - knowing the area - went up. The helicopter could only carry one man at a time. The 'copter came back and took Little the second trip. The third trip Dodge went. When they got back they were so short on gas that they had to make a trip into Helena. I think, Pete, that you and I had a little difference of opinion about who should go in the helicopter, and Hanson practically ordered me to go back to Helena in the helicopter. That was all the participation I had in the rescue work.

GRANGER: I would like to go back to the meeting between you and Jansson and Eaton at Meriwether on the evening of the fire. What time was that that you three were there?

MOIR: I think about 7 o'clock the night of August 5.

GRANGER: Eaton says he mentioned to you that he knew the jumpers were down, that he had flown over the fire.

MOIR: Yes, he told me the reason he was late with his appointment with me was because he had flown the fire. He didn't say anything about the jumpers, and I didn't ask him.

GRANGER: Why didn't it occur to you at that time to ask him about the jumpers?

MOIR: I rightly can't answer that. I didn't talk to him about his flight because I knew that the fire situation had changed so materially since he was in the area that I didn't think it was of any great importance in light of the present situation.

GRANGER: Don't you think it would have been natural for some concern to have been expressed at that time as to what may have happened to the jumpers, since you knew the fire had blown up at the lower end?

MOIR: As I have explained before, I really wasn't apprehensive about the jumpers at that stage of the game. I was sure they were on the fire, because I hadn't had any word from Missoula to the contrary.

GRANGER: Wouldn't it have been the normal thing for a crew on the fire - jumpers or otherwise - in possession of a radio to have reported out before that time as to what they were doing and the condition of the fire from where they were?

MOIR: Well, I suppose that that is probably true, although we were having so much trouble with radio communication that I didn't have too much confidence in their ability to get out by radio. Furthermore, I ordered the jumpers from Helena and had requested that they contact us by radio and also had detailed discussion as to when we might expect them over the fire. I mean I had requested that the plane contact Helena when it was over the fire, and we hadn't had any word from them before I left to go down the river, so I suppose I just figured that something had gone wrong with the radio communication, which frequently happens.

GRANGER: What I am trying to get at here is whether something more might have been done to determine what had happened to the jumpers earlier in the evening along the same line as the concern which Jansson has testified he felt over the crew on the Meriwether side of the fire, and if so, whether that might have made any difference if a party had been sent out earlier to discover the whereabouts of the jumpers -- whether that might have made any difference in saving those two men who were so badly burned if they had been found and gotten out of there considerably earlier.

MOIR: Yes, I can understand your point of view.

GRANGER: I am not expressing an opinion that it would have made any difference because I don't know, but believe the Board would like to be informed as fully as possible on that angle of it.

MOIR: You might be interested in a letter that I have here from Dr. Little bearing on that subject.

GRANGER: What is the gist of that letter?

MOIR: "In reference to your inquiries regarding the cases of Joseph Sylvia and Bill Hellman who were under my care in Saint Peter's Hospital on August 6, 1949 following being severely burned in the Gates of the Mountains' fire, I have the following statements to make.

The cause of death in both of these cases, in my opinion, was surgical shock secondary to massive third degree burns. In the case of Sylvia, I estimate that he had third degree burns on approximately seventy-five to eighty-five percent of his skin surface, and in the case of Hellman, I estimate that he had third degree burns on an estimated sixty-five to seventy-five percent of his skin surface. I further suspect that a contributory cause of death may be severe heat damage to the respiratory tree causing a late respiratory distress. There has been some conjecture raised as to whether or not earlier arrival under hospital care might have resulted in their survival. It is my opinion that this is not the case because it is characteristic of severe burns of this nature that the critical period in so far as survival goes arrives not at the immediate time or the time immediately following the burn itself, but rather eighteen to twenty-four hours, roughly speaking, following the time from injury at which time the physiological effects of the tissue damage take full effect. Both cases had received blood plasma, penicillin, had their burns adequately dressed, received fluids and oxygen and other supportive treatments to an extent which in my opinion was all that could possibly have been done for them and their death was I feel unpreventable.

If there are any further questions in regard to these two patients that I can answer for you, I shall be glad to be of assistance."

GRANGER: You feel Little was as competent a doctor as could be obtained to handle this type of injury?

HANSON: No reason to question it. He is a qualified doctor and has a good practice. He is very close to us because he has worked with us over the years in parachute jumper work.

GRANGER: Was this letter requested because you heard some question raised on this point I brought up?

MOIR: Yes.

GRANGER: Where did these questions arise?

MOIR: I had a call from Clyde Blake. I think it must have been about the time Gustafson was over here wanting to know what rescue operations had been initiated by the forest between 5 a.m. and 9 or 10 p.m., whatever it was. That was what brought my train of thought in that direction.

MAYS: I would like to know just a little bit more about the communication situation between Meriwether, Canyon Ferry and Helena. Was there constant communication there through the evening and night, and if not, why not? What was the failure? It seemed this information was at Meriwether but never got to Helena.

MOIR: I think there was so much confusion down there after Bob left Meriwether Landing and started out with the doctors on this rescue mission that the radio at that end was neglected.

SPACE: The log shows the message was picked up.

GRANGER: Which information did you mean, Larry?

MAYS: Mr. Moir said he called the hospital three times within an hour to ascertain the injuries of these men. I wondered why he couldn't have gotten that direct from Meriwether through Canyon Ferry.

MOIR: I attempted several times to do that without success.

CROCKER: Canyon Ferry was on the air but messages were not coming through. There was a lack of communication from Meriwether to Canyon Ferry because the supervisor did not get it, apparently.

JANSSON: About 17 other phones are on that line. We had a great deal of trouble getting through that night, and in addition, the picture at Canyon Ferry was - there was just one man there to handle the phone and radio and dispatching to these other fires on the district, so he was bogged down and he probably was on the phone when Meriwether was trying to get him or Missoula, and he looked after the phone instead of the radio - just more that what one man could handle.

GRANGER: Could you have sent someone out to Canyon Ferry to assist that man there in overcoming this difficulty?

MOIR: We sent a relief operator out to Canyon Ferry sometime during the night.

JANSSON: Yes, we ordered him at 6:45 p.m., and he arrived out there. It left one man, because the other man helped get what tools he could for the fire. I realized down there that night - and it was a tough decision for me - that if I left Meriwether that would be just the same as kicking the communications out the window because in the pressure down there I was sure that the untrained operator wouldn't stick to the radio - and that is just what happened. He left the radio to go eat, or to hunt someone up, and was out at various times during the evening, and that is what made my decision hard to up on the hill, because I didn't like to leave the communication.

COCHRAN: Were you aware of this message that went from Meriwether to Missoula shortly after 9 p.m., that two men were badly burned?

CROCKER: That message was intercepted. It was a message from Meriwether. We picked it up here. "Meriwether base camp called in to Canyon Ferry and informed them that the Mann Gulch fire had blown up and burned two jumpers badly. The other men may have been burned also. Requested doctor, two litters and blood plasma. Verified Canyon Ferry's receipt of their message and phoned this information to Fite at 2130. Smokejumpers' radio was not working or was caught in the blow-up. Meriwether base camp, Canyon Ferry and Missoula on 3250 and 3445 k.c. could not raise them."

COCHRAN: The message did not get to you?

MOIR: No, it didn't, and it didn't get to Canyon Ferry in its entirety either.

CROCKER: Here is the radio log for 9:57. "Missoula contacted Meriwether. Received information on the fire and injured men." They did get the message through to them at Canyon Ferry at 9:59 p.m. At 10:01 this message was intercepted: "Dodge, Sallee and Rumsey known to be safe, Hellman and unknown jumper badly burned. No trace of the 11 other jumpers. Rescue party being organized to bring out men. Doctor with plasma and litters going in, expect to bring men out in about 2 hours. Suggested the rescue party attempt to set up SPF set dropped to jumpers to get information out on the situation. They did not have extra SPF sets as Meriwether base camp and told them to get the situation at the base camp by use of messenger service. Fite had ordered 3 SPF sets for the fire. Date of delivery undetermined."

JANSSON: That part there is from Missoula. I said that would leave Meriwether without a radio.

CROCKER: That is the sequence of communications between here and Meriwether and the Canyon Ferry District. It is important that until I called you, Dunc, by telephone, that you had no information on this.

MOIR: No, I didn't have any until long after that.

COCHRAN: Is it true that Murphy knew about it and talked to Hand about it around 10 p.m.?

MOIR: He knew a call had come through stating that two jumpers were injured, that they needed doctors and plasma. That is correct. Then, he talked to somebody here about that and they asked for fuller information. Murphy talked to you direct, didn't he Clayton?

CROCKER: No.

MOIR: Anyway, they asked for more information and Murphy told them he would try to get it, but he was unable to get it.

CROCKER: I think that came through later on, Dune.

PRICE: I would like to ask Jansson a question or two. When you gave your story yesterday about the situation at Meriwether the evening after you scouted Mann Gulch and came back, as I recall you said that you thought or at least hoped that the jumpers had joined Hersey's crew. Did I get that correct?

JANSSON: Yes. I assumed after they jumped that they had joined Hersey or had landed in Willow Creek and we would hear from their radio any minute. It is when I found that they had not joined Hersey that I tried to contact them.

## TESTIMONY OF REGIONAL FORESTER HANSON

GUSTAFSON: As I understand it, Pete, there was a point in which the region stepped in on this whole situation in a rather large way, and you and Crocker and others proceeded to Helena, and you decided how the job would be divided. Will you please give a brief description for the benefit of the Board of how that division concerned the rescue and fire operations there and briefly your actions in connection with the rescue operations. I know you have a very detailed and fine chronological report in the first preliminary draft of the investigation. We don't need it in that much detail.

HANSON: I can read my account of it, if you like.

GRANGER: I wonder if that would help the Board any.

PRICE: Some of us have never seen these statements. I think it would be helpful to us.

HANSON:

Friday

8/5 11:30 a.m. I left headquarters for Seeley Lake Ranger Station to secure first-hand account of the details causing the death of Frank Moore. This proved to be a fire suppression, snag-falling incident. (By the way, during that time I was at Seeley, I learned through messages on the radio that there were smokejumpers on the Helena fire.)

10:30 p.m. I returned to Missoula. Being concerned over the general fire situation, I immediately called at the residence of Clayton Crocker and found him consulting with Fred Stillings, Smokejumper Project Foreman, relative to an unconfirmed report that some smokejumpers who had jumped on the Mann Gulch fire, Helena Forest, had become involved in a tragedy. Information at that time was very meager. Crocker telephoned Supervisor Moir and confirmed the fact that there was trouble in large amount on that fire. Arrangements were made at this time to send some 5 or 6 crews of sector overhead from various parts of the region.

8/6 12:30 a.m. Crocker, Clarence Strong, G. M. DeJarnette and I left Missoula for Helena by car.

3:00 a.m. We arrived in Helena at approximately 3:00 a.m., and went into consultation with Supervisor Moir.// Crocker assigned Monk DeJarnette to headquarters organization to at Helena, and sent Strong by boat to Meriwether Creek or

Elkhorn Creek with a crew, and overhead which arrived from the Lolo. (I might say that we were superimposing ourselves on the outfit--we arrived with very meager information, and it was very hard to find out the exact situation.)

6:00 a.m. Crocker left Strong with the understanding that we would fly over the fire and endeavor to get a preliminary map which we would drop to Strong in front of his boat as he was proceeding to his destination.

6:00 a.m. Crocker, Supervisor Moir and I left Helena by plane to scout the two fires. Crocker made preliminary maps, one copy of which was dropped to Strong as planned.

7:30 a.m. Returned to Helena. We proceeded from the airport to the supervisor's office and found the following note sent in by Ranger J. R. Jansson to Supervisor Moir:

"Found bodies of Robert Bennett, James O. Harrison, and one tentatively identified as Stanley J. Reba. Search continuing."

8/6 7:30 a.m. We tried to get a grasp of the current status of rescue work which had occurred and was under way. Received the impression from Supervisor Moir that Dr. Little participated in the initial rescue work and was on the fire. This was later found to be erroneous, since two doctors - Dr. Thomas L. Hawkins of Helena and Dr. R. S. Haines of Phoenix, Arizona - had climbed to the scene of the tragedy, found Sylvia and Hellman, and stretcher-bearers (I believe organized by the sheriff's office) had brought these two men to boats and in to the hospital. Repeated calls to the hospital failed to crystallize the situation, and apparently information at the supervisor's office was scant.

8:00 a.m. About this time Crocker and I consulted and decided there were two main jobs to be done: First, the general fire organization, which was well out of hand; and secondly, the rescue work and evacuation. Both demanded immediate action, particularly the rescue work. It was decided that Crocker would handle the fire and I would supervise all rescue and evacuation activities. I requested Moir to call St. Peter's Hospital and get the names of the two survivors who had been removed to the hospital, and to find out if Dr. Little was there or on the fire. Dr. Little actually was at the hospital, although this point was not made clear to me.

8:45 a.m. Called Coroner E. P. Munger (incidentally, the sheriff) to report to the supervisor's office for a hurried trip to the field, which he immediately did. He preceded me to Hilger's Landing, saying he had been on this job all night. Had Moir call the two hospitals to find out their ability to receive the casualties. St. Peter's reported that they had room for two more; two were there now; and they could handle four or five more if advance notice were given.

8:50 a.m. Moir called St. John's Hospital. They said had lots of room.

9:30 a.m. St. Peter's Hospital supplied the information the Joe Sylvia and Bill Hellman were in that hospital, and that the doctor reported their condition was fair to poor. Gave Press Release No. 1, copy attached. Arranged to have the relatives of James O. Harrison and Robert Bennett notified of their deaths.

9:45 a.m. Called Missoula - McLaughlin - to notify parents of Sylvia and Hellman that they were in the Helena Hospital suffering from serious burns.

8/6 10:15 a.m. Left with Moir and Crocker for Hilger Landing. Crocker previously informed me that DeJarnette had been ordered to deliver Mike Hardy and 16 stretcher-bearers to the forks of the road (this means the forks of the road about two miles above the mouth of Elkhorn Creek). I confirmed the fact that a helicopter had been ordered early, to be sent to Elkhorn, and that it should be there.

10:45 a.m. En-route on boat Moir told me that the doctor he had talked to at St. Peter's Hospital was Dr. Little, and that he evidently had been back there for some time.

10:55 a.m. Arrived at Hilger Landing. Found that Little had probably had not been on the fire at all, since he had volunteered his services in the last phone conversation with Moir. Previous to this time I had observed a message on the dispatcher's log requesting a doctor. This request was timed at about 7:00 a.m., and I had the understanding from Moir that it had been complied with by sending Little. Since I sensed a mix-up, I sent a messenger to DeJarnette to get the order for the doctor sent immediately.

11:45 a.m. Arrived at Meriwether fire camp with Crocker and Moir, and was surprised and relieved to find Smokejumpers W. B. Rumsey and Bob Sallee safe and uninjured. They gave us a brief account of

their experience, which I did not record. We took them on the boat with us, and on the return trip sent them to Helena and on to Missoula with instructions to DeJarnette to have Missoula notify their parents of their safety.

12:20 p.m. Arrived at the mouth of Elkhorn Creek by boat. Met Coroner Munger there, and Mr. Retz - the undertaker who represents the Opp & Conrad Funeral Home in Helena. Mr. Retz informed me that he had had ambulances available all night at two points, and was equipped to give us adequate, timely service. I did not make a firm deal with him, but it was mutually understood that he would proceed to meet demands as they occurred. I expected to find the helicopter at this point, but it was not there when I immediately landed, so sent a message to DeJarnette by Rumsey to get the helicopter and 16 men to Elkhorn as quickly as possible. I included in the message to DeJarnette to have Mike Hardy's crew pick up the stretchers which I had observed scattered around the Hilger Landing, belonging to the hospital, and bring them to Elkhorn with them when they came. I told the skipper of the launch to keep boats at both ends, i.e., at Elkhorn and at Hilger's Landing.

8/6 12:30 p.m. Arrived at Elkhorn cabin, one-fourth mile from mouth of creek, coincidentally with the arrival of the helicopter bringing Dr. Little from Helena. Ranger Jansson and Foreman Dodge were there. Decided on a quick search again for possible survivors, with Dr. Little in party.

12:45 p.m. Sent the helicopter with Jansson to scout a landing place as close as possible to the bodies.

1:07 p.m. Helicopter returned, having located ideal spot, leaving Jansson up there to continue the search. Dodge informed me he felt all bodies would be found in an area of maximum possible size one-half mile long by 200 yards wide.

1:18 p.m. Helicopter off to saddle with Dr. Little. At this time from Dodge we found out that Strong had come to Elkhorn, retraced his route to Meriwether, and was scouting from there.

1:24 p.m. The situation from a search standpoint alright, so at this hour Crocker started afoot to hunt up Curtis and his crew, who had been sent into the general vicinity of Ives Ranch during the night.

1:31 p.m. Helicopter departed with Foreman Dodge.

1:45 p.m. I decided that Supervisor Moir was not needed in evacuation work as much as he was in Helena, and since the helicopter had to go to Helena for gas, he left. (Since Crocker had left I was a little concerned about losing control of the situation. I thought it was better than for Dunc - since he knew what arrangements had been made - to carry on with DeJarnette. (at Helena).

2:30 p.m. While waiting for Hardy's crew, the Bonanze patrol plane went over, and heavy clouds were forming.

2:32 p.m. Two boats landed at Elkhorn, containing three men, one of whom was a photographer.

2:46 p.m. Third boat arrived with 12 men, including Mike Hardy, Stratton, smokejumper stretcher-bearers, and Johnson's mechanic. They had the stretchers.

2:55 p.m. Was informed that either Hellman or Sylvia had died. Rained a bit at about this time, which raised the humidity and appreciably cooled off the fire.

3:40 p.m. Stratton and 6 men with one stretcher were sent on foot to the saddle helicopter landing area. Hardy and four remained.

(Note: Stratton and his men did not get off earlier because I planned on shuttling them up with the helicopter, but when the heavy clouds formed, with associated wind and rain, I decided to wait no longer because of continued possible poor flying conditions, so started them on their hike, which was not great.)

8/6 4:05 p.m. Helicopter returned from Helena.

4:15 p.m. Stratton radioed just entering timber.

4:18 p.m. Helicopter left for the saddle with additional stretchers.

4:30 p.m. Stratton reported on the main ridge, just under skyline ridge.

4:39 p.m. Helicopter returned to Elkhorn.

4:47 p.m. Mr. Ebersoll of Bureau of Reclamation, hiked into camp and reported that he had contacted Dr. Little, Dodge and Jansson, and that they had found and marked 9 bodies. They reported that Jansson had gone into Meriwether Camp. These men had made their search, and instead of going back to the landing strip, had hiked down Mann Gulch to the river, where I presume Dr. Little hailed a boat. Dodge came into camp.

Between We shuttled the remaining litters, food, plasma, some water 4:47 and Hardy's men, and Ebersoll, back up on the hill.  
6:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. Dodge, Hardy, the mechanic and I were all left at Elkhorn. Helicopter was sent to take the first body - which had been evacuated to the saddle - out to the road at this time. We had radio contact between Elkhorn and the saddle.

6:10 p.m. Five men sent to Coroner Munger arrived to help. I sent them hiking up the hill. This made a total of 16 stretcher-bearers up there.

6:45 p.m. One body was delivered the night of August 6. I did not keep a diary during the night, but after the helicopter took the first body in, he returned, picked me up and we flew over the saddle where I got a look at the scene of the tragedy, dropped some old canvas, and proceeded to Hilger Landing and in to Helena.

Arranged to have helicopter ready to go at 4:30 a.m. During the night at Helena I called Stillings and arranged for an identification crew of smokejumpers to come over. Called McLaughlin and arranged for Beaman to come over and make all arrangements with the undertakers in regard to immediate care, shipment, etc. Ordered canvas, cloth bags for small articles, tags, to be prepared and available at Hilger Landing at 4:30 a.m., August 7. Ordered lunches and coffee for the stretcher crew to be delivered at Hilger Landing for shuttle to saddle.

Being convinced that there were no further survivors, I notified Missoula and the press accordingly.

About 8/6 9:00 p.m. I called Earl Loveridge and gave him what information I had up to this time.

12 Went to bed, but on reflection, got up and phoned an order to Midnight Missoula for a hot breakfast to be delivered by plane and dropped at the saddle, with daylight get-off.

8/7 3:00 a.m. Went to the supervisor's office, and found Murphy in a "sweat" trying to straighten out his dispatching.

4:00 a.m. Met Seth Jackson about this time.

4:30 a.m. Arrived with Jackson at Hilger Landing and found that all orders issued in regard to equipment and supplies were available as planned. There was a slight delay in servicing the helicopter,

5:30 a.m. but arrived at the saddle by helicopter on its first trip that day. On that trip took initial supply of canvas and equipment. Found that the bodies located during the night (4, or possibly 5) had been carried up to the saddle, and that two more were being brought up. This crew worked all night with little food, and ran out of water. Their performance was remarkable. During the night they searched out a five-gallon can of water that had been discarded by the smokejumpers after the initial jump as no good.

6:00 a.m. The wrapping of bodies with canvas and shuttling them to Hilger Landing proceeded in an orderly, businesslike manner. Particular care was necessary to collect all metal articles which would serve as identification.

Jansson, and particularly Dodge, during the search with the doctor late August 6 - Saturday - had located 9 bodies and identified as many as they could. This now proved to be a big help in completing such identification as was possible.

6:05 a.m. Helicopter made its first trip off (second body).

6:15 a.m. Hot breakfast was dropped by Ford trimotor, and gladly received.

After all the bodies collected at the saddle during the night had been wrapped and sent down, I hiked with the boys to the scene of the tragedy and looked superficially over the area, and returned with two bodies.

I personally "kept the books" on identification, making sure that identification articles were kept straight, properly attached and questioned as to who identified each body, and why, recording same where applicable, on shipping tags attached.

10:45 a.m. The last body was found. I sent a message to this effect to Helena for forwarding to Missoula and to Meriwether Camp, since they - Dodge and Jansson - through Dodge's action the night before, had arranged to have an additional searching crew of 25 men sent up from Meriwether in case they were needed for a more intensive search over a large area. I wanted to head this off. They never arrived, due to change of plans, I believe.

Noon By this time all bodies had been delivered to Hilger Landing.

After all the bodies had been brought into the saddle and shipped, Mr. Ebersoll of the Bureau of Reclamation, who throughout was of extreme help due to his diligence as a scout, had a talk with the smokejumper boys at the saddle, and initiated an idea in their minds to make a token collection for erection of monuments and start of a benefit fund for relatives. He stated that he felt the Gates of the Mountains Boat Club - a wealthy organization - would put up the real finances to be used for these purposes. I previously had arranged with Mr. Ebersoll to build rock cairns at the location of each body.

An instance which should be recorded occurred when the boys were about ready to leave. A blond-haired chap built a small cross out of a couple of sticks, placed it in the ground and stood before it in reverence, thinking himself unobserved.

Dodge and I assembled for transportation all valuable property, including stretchers, plasma, radio, etc., and sent it down by 'copter.

Just got the camp cleaned up properly when a C-47 came over and submerged us with a hot lunch which had previously been ordered to take care of the additional searching crew, so salvaged the trappings.

Dodge and I returned to Hilger Landing by helicopter and proceeded on to Helena.

Beaman operating OK.

Report of identification crew: Assignment complete and positive.

4:30 p.m. Conferred with Gustafson and Ralph Space and then headed for Missoula by Ford trimotor with the smokejumper stretcher crew, arriving at 7:30 p.m.

Press Release No. 1

(As referred to in Memorandum of 8/9/49 by Regional Forester Hanson.)

Helena, Montana  
August 6th 9:15 A.M.

Memo to Press:

The first serious accident in many years occurred to smokejumpers employed by the Forest Service in this Region late Friday afternoon.

At the present time, due to lack of communications, and precipitous country our information is very incomplete. Rescue work is under way as aggressively as possible, with everything at our command.

Our information at present is that out of 15 men who jumped, two are in the hospital and two bodies have been recovered. One is uninjured and ten are unaccounted for.

Names must be withheld until next of kin are notified.

P. D. Hanson  
Regional Forester

PRICE: The identification crew -- did they jump down to the area?

HANSON: No, they came over during the night and were there in the early morning. They had a dirty job. They made complete and positive identification.

MCLAUGHLIN: I might add to that statement. In picking the crew here they canvassed the boys so they got a crew of men who they figured was better acquainted with this particular group of jumpers than anyone else. They were very careful about the selection of this crew for identification. They took along with them the medical certificates, heights, weights, etc., from the files here.

HANSON: I had a lapse of action, I think, by not calling Van Meter over, but this would have been quite a nuisance to do, so I coordinated with Mac (McLaughlin) on publicity release.

GRANGER: Gus, I believe that in order to complete this record, before we are through you should insert in the record a brief statement of your inspection so that it will be evident in the record that the Washington Office had someone on the ground early in the game who made a rather thorough check-up on the occurrence

Gustafson assented.

TESTIMONY OF REGIONAL PERSONNEL OFFICER MCLAUGHLIN

GUSTAFSON: Mr. McLaughlin had a very difficult job in Missoula, probably one of the very difficult jobs in this whole tragedy. That was the notification of next of kin, handling press releases from the Missoula office and various other details that were closely associated with the whole incident. I thought it would benefit the board to get some information as to how that was organized and handled from the regional office level.

CROCKER: Before Mac begins, I would like to say that within a matter of 15 minutes after the first news reached here that the boys were burned, an order went out from the regional office stopping the issuance of any publicity until cleared through here. So it wasn't something that dragged on. That was the first action taken.

MCLAUGHLIN: I am not going to go into detail, but in the event the board wants additional information other than what I give in this short review, I will be glad to answer questions.

I was called sometime between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. on August 6 and told that they had had a serious accident on the Helena and asked if I would come down to the fire office to help. At that time, we had confirmation that Hellman and Sylvia were in the hospital, three others dead - two identified as Harrison and Bennett, the other questionable, and that Dodge was okay.

COCHRAN: This was the morning of the 6th?

MCLAUGHLIN: The morning of the 6th. I immediately got in touch with Sandberg and told him that I thought either he or Blake should go to the Helena and aid in the detailed investigation. At Blake's suggestion, we wired Jackson the information at Portland.

I shall divide my review into three sections:

1. Notification of next of kin.
2. My work with Beaman in connection with the disposition of the bodies.
3. Press releases.

1. I did not keep a record of the time of day when we sent messages and so forth - things were just happening a little bit too fast. We immediately sent a message to Sylvia's parents advising them of his injury and the doctor's report that he was resting, his condition was fair. I called Carter Helseth, who is forest dispatcher at Kalispell, and asked him to advise Mrs. Hellman and Bill Hellman's parents, and told him we would keep him currently informed. I then tried to get in touch with Beaman. He was

out of town, so I got his acting assistants - both Todd and Iverson - and asked them to come down and assist in our contacts with the Bureau of Employee Compensation regarding the disposition of the bodies of the two that we knew were dead. We kept in current touch with the dispatchers in the Helena office. We received a list of names from Fire Control as to who had participated in this jump. We did not release, at that time, this list of names to the Helena office; and, as previously stated by Crocker, it was agreed that no names would be released to the press until we had definite information that the next of kin had received our notification. That held true for the boys that were injured as well as those who were killed.

About the middle of the morning, probably closer to noon, we received a message from Cooper in the Helena office that five more jumpers had been located and that doctor and litters had been ordered. They did not have any detailed information as to their condition. We continued to follow up with them on this message, and later in the afternoon found that it could not be confirmed. It seems as though there was mix-up in a message that had come in from one of the rescue units. They couldn't trace it down.

When we received information that Sylvia had died, they also told us that Hellman had taken a turn for the worse. I called the Flathead office and gave that information to Helseth, who in turn passed it on to the family. In conferring with Stillings and Paul Roberts, who was acting regional forester, it was decided that we would offer Mrs. Hellman the use of a Forest Service plane to take her to Helena. She said she would like to make the trip. The plane was on another trip, so we were delayed in dispatching it to Kalispell. In the meantime we received word of Hellman's death, which we immediately telephoned to Helseth at Kalispell. Helseth was personally acquainted with the parents and the wife, and that was our purpose in working through him.

GRANGER: Why didn't you offer to get Mrs. Hellman over there to Helena as soon as you knew he had been brought to the hospital?

MCLAUGHLIN: It just didn't enter our minds - and I think one reason that it didn't enter my mind was that I asked Helena - I think it was Cooper - the condition of these boys - did they expect them to pull through or was their condition so poor that it was doubtful, and they told me that their condition was such that their lives were not in danger.

GRANGER: Where did they get that information?

MCLAUGHLIN: Whether it came from a nurse or a doctor I do not know. We received telegrams and telephone calls from relatives of the smokejumper group as to the safety of their sons or brothers or husbands, and in every case Mrs. Page was able to tell them that their boy or relative was not on the Helena fire. Very fortunately, we only received one message from a

relative of a boy that was on the Helena fire, other than the names we had reported, and that was from Dr. Diertert of Missoula. He knew that his boy went to the fire because he lived here in town, and we kept him posted as information became available. I talked to him once myself, and he came to the office to inquire between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. when I was out to lunch. Mr. Space talked to him.

In the morning we had no information as to the next of kin for the Harrison boy. I called Hoell of Helena Forest and asked if they had notified the next of kin. He said they hadn't. At my request they immediately got in touch with a brother who was in Helena and gave him the information. He then relayed it to his parents here in Missoula.

Sometime between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m., I believe it was, we got the message from Dr. Little, by way of Mr. DeJarnette, at Helena that they had found all the bodies with the exception of two, and that he had no hope of those two being found alive. Prior to that in the afternoon we had received the message definitely confirmed of Rumsey and Sallee being okay.

GRANGER: Was that the first word you had that they were okay?

MCLAUGHLIN: That's the first definite word I had. That was about the middle of the afternoon, I believe. We immediately sent that information to their parents. After receiving Dr. Little's message, we decided it then best to notify the rest of the families. Personal contacts were made in Missoula, and in one case, we also called a close friend of the family and asked him to visit with the family who had lost their son, which he did.

GRANGER: This afternoon that you got the word about Sallee Rumsey was the day after the fire?

MCLAUGHLIN: That was the 6th - we are still on the 6th. We sent a fast wire to the families in the west. Because of the hour, we decided that we would send a night message to the eastern families so that they wouldn't be receiving this message in the middle of the night. We requested the Western Union to confirm delivery of all telegrams.

"It is with deep regret that we notify you that a group of smokejumpers which included David R. Navon (we did not always know the relationship of the person notified to the boy. That is why the wording is the way it is) were trapped in a forest fire in isolated mountainous area near Helena, Montana, and killed late August,. Rescue parties accompanied by a doctor have located the bodies of all except two. The doctor is confident there is no hope for them. All details surrounding the accident are not fully known. Will wire additional information August 7. We extend our deepest sympathy. /s/ Sidney E. McLaughlin, Personnel Officer, U. S. Forest Service."

Some confirmations of our telegrams were received late that night. Others came in the next morning. The next morning, August 7, there were two that we did not have a report on. One of them we were able to trace through the Canadian Immigration Service near Babb, Montana, and found that the message had been delivered to that office, that they had sent a messenger to Babb, Montana to inform the parents. The other one was at Modesto, California. The Western Union couldn't get a response from their office in Modesto. We tried a person-to-person telephone call without success. The Western Union, at our request, sent a message to Stockton asking the chief operator there to make every effort either by telephone or otherwise to get the message through. In the meantime, I called the sheriff's office at Modesto, told him the purpose of the message, and he sent a car out for the father. While the sheriff was getting the father a message came from Western Union that the wire had been delivered that morning. A half hour later the father called, so I knew he had the message before I talked to him.

We made some telephone calls on August 7, 8, and 9, following these initial telegrams and gave information as we had it. Every effort was to make it as personal as we possibly could. The next of kin, I felt, were unusually considerate under the circumstances. In Mr. Thol's case, Supervisor Neitzling was asked to tell him at Kalispell.

GRANGER: I understand that following this the regional forester went around personally to see a number of the families.

MCLAUGHLIN: The regional forester, Crocker and Dodge visited the three families in Missoula and two in Kalispell. Dodge and a party of smokejumpers attended the funeral of the McVey boy near St. Ignatius, Montana.

GRANGER: Was there any final letter from the regional office to these people, a letter of condolence?

MCLAUGHLIN: Yes, a letter of condolence signed by the regional forester telling them more of the story of what happened on the fire, along with his condolences went to each family with the exception of those he visited personally and the family in Charlotte, North Carolina. An unclod of the boy flew to Missoula, arriving August 8 and he had a chance to visit with Mr. Hanson and also with Mr. Dodge and he was very well satisfied. Before he left I had occasion to call the father and at that same time I let him talk to the father and mother before he left Missoula. Mr. Hanson sent a letter of condolence without describing the fire to this family at Charlotte, North Carolina.

Mrs. Reba and the father and mother were here last week while I was gone. (Going back to boy from North Carolina) We got letters both from Mr. Entwistle, the uncle, and the mother stating that Entwistle would be glad to work under Dodge at any time. It shows how impressed they were with him.

GRANGER: Was there any criticism of the fact that the first of kin of Sallee and Rumsey were not notified until late in the afternoon?

MCLAUGHLIN: No criticism from either boys or families.

GRANGER: Seems a tremendous deal.

MCLAUGHLIN: It might have been due to my not being more curious. This information was only a rumor and we did not want to release it until definitely confirmed.

In connection with the news releases, both the Helena office and this office were waited upon quite aggressively by both the radio and newspaper representatives for the names of the boys who were in that flight. We told them we could not release names and why, but that just as soon as we had confirmation that the families had received our messages we would release the names individually and at the same time we gave them a brief history of each boy, where from, where attended school, etc., and the press, I would say, was very cooperative as soon as they found out why we couldn't release names.

GRANGER: Was there criticism in the local press of having jumped the boys in there?

MCLAUGHLIN: No, neither was there criticism in talking with the reporters at the desk. We did not tell the story of the fire at Missoula because we had the information only as it came in by pieces and there fire news was released from Helena.

When Sallee and Rumsey got in late Saturday evening they told us they had been interviewed by the press in Helena. We anticipated that the word would get around that they were in town and had survived and they might be interviewed at the Loft or someplace else, so we called them to the office and asked them if they had any objection to telling their story to the press with us present if there was an agreement with the press that they would not be further interviewed and they said it would be all right. Mr. Stillings made every effort to get a representative from each one of the radio stations and the Missoulian. The only people we finally ended up getting was the KGVO radio station. Rumsey did the talking and told the story just as he had in Helena. They didn't get too inquisitive, they accepted the information with very little questioning.

MOIR: If you are interested in that I can enlarge on it. I probably know more about the local reaction, since I live in Helena. There was a lot of public criticism by the ordinary men-in-the-street around Helena. I think it was entirely unreasoning but still it was quite vocal and for some days. The general thought was that it was a crime to subject anybody to loss of his life for minor values involved in the particular area as they saw it, especially the scrubby timber and grass and then also there was some direct criticism of me individually because of the fact that I had been

instrumental in creating that wild area and people had the erroneous impression for the reason there was no livestock permitted to graze in the area and consequently the grass was very rank and provided fuel for the fire.

GRANGER: How does that leave the state of mind of the critics in Helena?

MOIR: Undoubtedly there are a few people who still feel we did the wrong thing, but they are probably a definite minority. The Forest Service organization always has some critics and they naturally fasten on anything of this nature that might add fuel to the fire, but generally speaking, the people of Helena are favorably disposed to the Service, although a few are not.

MCLAUGHLIN: In connection with the press releases, as we cleared the names here we notified Helena office so it would be cleared there.

On Monday, August 8, Mr. Van Meter took over and organized the additional press releases that were made, the summarizations, etc., in connection with the fire.

The contact with the Life photographer was handled by Fire Control, and correlated with Mr. Hanson and I&E later.

COCHRAN: Did Life Magazine become interested on the basis of what they read in the newspapers?

CROCKER: No, their photographer had been working for some two months on a section of a Forest Service article to come out in Life in the near future. He had been here two weeks covering fire control activities in June and July. He was particularly interested in aerial fire control. When he heard of this tragedy he got in touch with his home office and they told him to cover it as part of the feature. But when he arrived here, the script writer was on the ground and they thought this thing was so much in the public limelight they could not hold it up for the regular Forest Service feature article. Therefore they released it as a special and it will in no way influence the feature story.

BLAKE: I am wondering if this reaction in Helena is not due to the erroneous report that jumpers were dropped in burning area. I had friends here from Seattle who told me they had the same idea. Apparently that erroneous impression on the Coast has not been corrected as far as the public is concerned as they still think some of the men were burned while hung up in their chutes.

JACKSON: A friend in Washington, D. C. told me the same thing. It seems to be a universal impression.

MCLAUGHLIN: We had that information that an erroneous report had gotten out and we made it clear in our releases that that did not happen, that jump

was satisfactory, and that the blow-up had come about two hours after the jump. I don't remember what was in the local press specifically, but I am sure they emphasized both over the local radio and press that the jump was satisfactory with no injuries and that they jumped in a safe place and the blow-up of the fire was two hours later.

BLAKE: I asked my friends if they had seen anything in the newspapers or heard anything on the radio that would correct their impression, but they hadn't.

HANSON: Life Magazine corrected that.

MAYS: The further away you are from an area where something like this happens, the less value it has as news. The papers would not run a release correcting every little detail.

GRANGER: I would like to have copies of the news releases.

MCLAUGHLIN: Van Meter has them.

In connection with the disposition of the bodies, Mr. Beaman handled all that himself at Helena. I kept in close touch with him on it. He had a tough job and did a fine job.

The Compensation Commission requires that we must get individual clearance on the movement of the body of any employee subject to the Federal Employees Compensation Act. On the morning of August 6 we wired the Commission information on Bennett and Harrison. We also told them that there was a possibility of others being lost in this same fire and we asked them for delegated authority to handle it all at this end and incur expense without individual approval.

Fiscal Control also sent a telegram to Mr. Zimmerli telling him briefly what had happened and asked him if he could help out in obtaining action from the Commission.

Western Union advised us they would make every effort to contact an employee of the Bureau of Employees Compensation in Washington on Saturday.

When we had word from Dr. Little that there was no hope of finding any more alive, I called Mr. Loveridge and gave him the information as we had it then and told him of our wire to the Compensation Commission and asked if it would be possible for him to secure authority for us to handle all of this at this end and send the bills to the Commission after the details were cleared up. In about 30 minutes Zimmerli called me back and said that Director McCauley of the Bureau of Employees Compensation granted us that authority.

In the meantime Mr. Hanson called and asked that Mr. Beaman be sent to Helena to handle that end there. Beaman was out of town. We sent for

arrangements to fly him to Helena at 4:30 Sunday morning, August 7 to be there when the first bodies were brought in off the fire. When he arrived in Missoula I gave him the information that we had from Zimmerli and he collected the other data he needed. I suggested it might be well for him to contact Zimmerli on Sunday morning for further confirmation of delegated authority. We contacted the next of kin at this end in regard to disposition of the bodies so that they wouldn't be receiving telegrams from more than one person. As we received information we relayed it to Mr. Beaman at Helena. We also kept in close touch with the local funeral homes here and at Ronan, Montana and Kalispell, that were selected by the respective families advising them as to the possibilities of when the bodies might be ready so funeral arrangements could be made. This approval seemed better than to call the families. We asked them at Helena to advise the other funeral homes accordingly so they could make plans with the families as early as possible.

The Veterans Administration was of considerable assistance to Beaman. Beaman worked night and day to assist the Helena Funeral Home in getting material they needed in order that the bodies could be shipped at the earliest possible date. He also had difficulty with one or two other Helena funeral homes who were making complaints because they did not get a share in the business. He had checked with the Veterans Administration and also a funeral home in Kalispell, the director of which he knew personally, and found out that the Helena Funeral Home selected was the most reliable and that the Veterans Administration had cancelled one of the others in Helena for unsatisfactory services.

The cost was greater than the guidelines given in our Forest Service manual (which is terribly out of date) but he gave Mr. Zimmerli that information by phone and Zimmerli got confirmation from the Bureau of Employees Compensation that all bills would be paid.

One body arrived at Brooklyn and had to be changed before the funeral. The expenses were paid by the family and Beaman in taking it up through Zimmerli got the Bureau of Employees Compensation to agree to stand the additional expense.

With the exception of one case, we received no complaints from the funeral homes or from the families. We had one complaint here at Missoula and I came down after they got the body in town and got information from the director of the funeral home and called Beaman and gave him the information so he checked on that end. They found the two bodies had not been loaded properly in the ambulance that hauled them to Missoula. It wasn't part of the initial preparation. But as a result of that experience, Beaman wired all the funeral homes and briefly told them what they might expect. I had occasion to talk to three by long distance and gave them similar information over the phone. They said from their knowledge of similar

cases in the past they would be prepared to meet expected conditions. To the best of our knowledge they handled it very nicely at that end.

GRANGER: Were the families called upon to bear any cost in connection with the funerals?

MCLAUGHLIN: I haven't checked with Beaman today. The last time I checked he didn't have anything. The Bureau of Employees Compensation agreed to ship the bodies which included sealers and caskets, and they also allowed \$200 for funeral expenses after arrival. A couple were 50c or 75c above \$200.

PRICE: How was it determined where to ship the bodies?

MCLAUGHLIN: We asked the families by telegram or over the phone.

COCHRAN: Did you talk to all these people that you wired?

MCLAUGHLIN: Not all of them.

The matter of collecting personal effects - Mr. Stillings made Bob Manchester, a smokejumper squad leader, available. He went to the banks, post office, laundries, etc., to determine if anything that belonged to the boys was there. We assembled all personal effects. We shipped them to the parents and paid the charges from our welfare fund as it couldn't be done officially. Watches and valuable papers were sent officially along with an official letter which included a list of the other things that had been sent by express. We didn't send any of the cash found in their effects but made arrangements with a bank to write cashiers checks payable to the next of kin to cover the amount of each found in each case. That pretty much covers what we did.

COCHRAN: For the record we should find out if the families did have to bear part of the funeral expenses.

MCLAUGHLIN: I will have to find out from Beaman.

GRANGER: I think it would be desirable for the record to have it.

MCLAUGHLIN: Would you rather ask him direct?

GRANGER: If you can clear it up right away, yes.

**TESTIMONY OF REGIONAL FISCAL AGENT BEAMAN**

GRANGER: The question is, Mr. Beaman, whether any of the families were called upon to bear any of the funeral expense or was it all covered by the Compensation Commission.

BEAMAN: We do not have all the returns in on them yet. The majority of those received have been \$200 or less on the receiving end and all dope we have indicates very strongly that the Commission will pay \$200 at point of delivery for funeral expense. We have one case, Dr. Thompson, where funeral bill is \$1,262.63 at the receiving end. Obviously Commission won't pay more than the \$200.00. Up at Kalispell on the Hellman case the arrangements are that the County would pay \$130 of the funeral bill which would bring the bill down to \$200.00. On the Sylvania case in Massachusetts we have not been able to get any bills or claims. We have written to Region Seven to get the administrative assistant from the White Mountain Forest to go to Plymouth to help Sylvias with claims.

GRANGER: Is \$200 absolute limit?

BEAMAN: Yes.

GRANGER: Choice as to cost and character of funeral at receiving end was left with family?

BEAMAN: Yes. We did to some extent try to inform as carefully as possible that we anticipated anything over \$200 would be at their own expense.

GRANGER: How did you arrange about shipping bodies from Helena to receiving place. To whom consigned?

BEAMAN: Between Mac and myself we dealt with relatives as to what undertaker the bodies were to be consigned. We did not make any selection of undertaker at receiving end. In one case from Brooklyn, New York, the sealer in the casket apparently broke down and the undertaker, in order to conduct any kind of funeral, had to take the sealer out of the casket and it had gone too far to use the old casket so had to have new one. We took that up with the Commission and they allowed the additional expense.

The picture on cost to families may change when all the individual claims are completed. We plan on a check up with the families and otherwise after the Commission and GAO have paid. Only then will we know what has been left for families to pay where the bills at destination exceed \$200.00. In the cases involving veterans there is still another complication or uncertainty, ie., many states through county commissioners, contribute from \$100 to \$200 towards funeral expenses of veterans. This is usually handled directly between undertaker and commissioners with clearance through local veterans organization. We will have to follow up on many cases for this

phase. In some cases it will cover any costs not taken care of by Compensation Commission. We have a good line up on the state participation possibilities through availability of U. S. Veterans Administration headquarters in Missoula. Another "angle" to be considered is that World War II veterans under certain conditions come under the dependency benefits of the Social Security Act. We are working pretty closely with the local Social Security office to insure that any dependents entitled to these benefits will receive them.

The two largest bills for funerals at destination which we now have recorded are:

Bennett, Robert J	\$ 675.23
Thompson, Silas R	\$1,262.73

## TESTIMONY OF REGIONAL SAFETY OFFICER BLAKE

BLAKE: On arrival at Helena August 6 about noon I contacted Sallee and Rumsey from whom I obtained stories concerning the tragedy. Their stories were essentially the same as those told here so it is not necessary to go into detail. Upon arrival at boat landing between 3 and 4 p.m. I contacted Dr. Little as he was coming off the boat and inquired of him as to the conditions at the tragedy area, as to whether he thought there were any survivors. He informed me that in his estimation there was no chance of any survivors, of anyone not found at that time. I informed him at that time of the deaths of Hellman and Sylvia. He wasn't surprised at the death of Sylvia but was surprised that Hellman would not recover as he did not think he was so badly burned. The rest of the day in connection with the rescue action has been pretty well covered except that I arrived within the Mann Gulch area in time to accompany the search party in the finding of the last body. We found this body shortly before noon on August 7. During that day I accompanied Dodge, with the exception of the time we were flying in the helicopter, throughout the area and obtained from him accounts of the landings and of the tragedy in detail. These were essentially the same as told here and as told other times during our contact with Mr. Dodge. Method of training in Region One as it applies particularly to smokejumpers -- the smokejumper foreman and those who have been engaged in connection with training have not only received the first training in connection with the 4-step method and principles of training and foremanship as it applies to their particular training, but refresher courses as well. I consider those who have been taking part in the training have received the best training as instructors that we could give them. Therefore, I consider that they have been able to get across their training to the best extent. In addition to that, Personnel has cooperated with Fire Control in obtaining all the available films and other training aids that might be beneficial in connection with smokejumper or fire fighting training. Some of these films have been produced in Region One, such as "The Smokejumpers," "Axeman," "Sawyer," and part of the smokechaser picture. We have been making use of Region Four smokechaser and fire fighting film as training aids. We also obtained copies of telephone climber pictures from the Beel Telephone Company and copies of safety first aid film for use of first aid training of personnel.

GRANGER: Do you feel that sufficient attention has been given to instructions to men what to do in case they get into a tight situation. I am thinking of the statement made that "over a large span of years no injury has occurred where men followed instructions of leader." Has it been given adequate place?

BLAKE: We stressed it all the way through in our firefighting training -- the necessity for the foreman to be always alert to any blow-up condition or any condition that might trap individuals or crews on fire and to be always alert to possibility of escape. During all my experience in connection with firefighting, the past 30 years or more I never had any need for a back fire in order to escape from grass fire -- we found we could always escape through the flames to burned area.

GRANGER: Has it been stressed to do what leader tells them to?

BLAKE: Always stressed throughout region at fire training courses. It has been given sufficient attention in my estimation. As pointed out by Dodge, perhaps we have not gone into means of escape from grass fires as much as we should but had no occasion before. Might possibly on an eastern fire but not to my knowledge.

PRICE: Have you in mind anything in the smokejumper scheme of organization that might make more effective the employment of the leadership which you try to train into the foreman and the response to that leadership which you try to train into the foreman and the response to that leadership that you attempt to bring to the attention of the younger men? I have in mind that Dodge apparently did not know his team intimately and they did not know him intimately.

BLAKE: I don't know if this is the answer, but immediately upon my return from Helena I took the matter up with Space and Fred Stillings with suggestion that we place greater emphasis on the need of smokejumpers and everyone else to follow leaders and foremen, using the Mann Gulch tragedy as an illustration of what can happen when foreman orders are not followed. Possibly this is something that can be emphasized further to the group when they take off for a fire under a new foreman, that he is boss and that they must follow this instructions. I don't know if this was not done, but possibly we can place more emphasis on it.

PRICE: I was thinking more of mutual understanding between jumpers and foreman. If these men had been accustomed to working with Dodge there might have been quite a different response to his orders to get in burned area.

BLAKE: I have a similar feeling.

GRANGER: How do the men live in respect to physical contact with squad leaders and the crew foremen? Are they quartered at same place -- foremen and jumpers?

CROCKER: No. The squad leaders are straw bosses and they do live more closely with mill run of smokejumper-firemen than the foremen and they live in the barracks. The foremen have families and maintain residences in town. Certain periods of time they do spend in camp but they do not live with

jumpers as closely as squad leaders. Squad leaders are short-term men and do have close relationship with the workers. It is an important question. A fundamental principle of our entire fire suppression organization is that stripes don't count. When a ranger from the Flathead is assigned as fire boss on Kootenai his authority is top. Maybe an assistant supervisor or man of higher regular authority may work under him.

GRANGER: There was no question with those two men yesterday that Dodge was boss. The question was whether they knew each other well enough. Smokejumpers are often put into more dangerous places than ground crews and there might be need for more understanding between them and bosses.

BLAKE: Not difficult with ordinary firefighters. I have had no trouble with total strangers as foremen and men as crews. With smokejumpers it might be different. They are trained to act individually. There is more inclination to think, "It is my neck and I have a right to act individually."

(Gustafson asked if Hersey testimony would be desirable. Consensus was that it would not be necessary.)

**TESTIMONY OF ASSISTANT REGIONAL CHIEF OF FIRE CONTROL SPACE**

GUSTAFSON: The Board would like to hear what you had been providing in your smokejumper course on fire behavior.

SPACE: Each spring I have conducted a one-day course in fire behavior for smokejumpers. I don't believe they all took it. I know all the squad leaders and foremen have had it and I think beyond that it was confined to those who have been with the smokejumpers one year previous. This one-day course divides into two parts, a lecture in the morning and a field session in the afternoon. In the morning I conducted chalk talks on how fires behave, where to attack them and if fires get too hot, how to escape. I don't confine this entirely to small fires although emphasis was placed primarily on types of fires the smokejumpers would be expected to fight, either as individuals or as a member of an 8-man or larger squad. The reason we did not confine it to that was that I felt that sometime they would be on a larger fire and they should have an understanding of how the fire boss was thinking on these fires, what techniques he would use and how they would be expected to perform in that case.

In all this I did stress the element of safety and how to escape from fires and I had the confidence of the boys well enough that they asked almost innumerable questions and I answered them.

In the afternoon, we went up into the Nine Mile country where there have been lots of fires in the past. We went out and I showed them where fires had burned, asking them where they would attack that particular type of fire and in general followed through then on the ground the questions that had been covered in the lecture in the morning.

Again I had a lot of questions asked me, including a lot covering large fires, and wherever I could when the question came up concerning escape from a large fire, I did answer specifically, but also stressed that it is impossible for me or anyone else to cover all possible combinations of fires that might arise and all kinds of situations they might find themselves in so in case anything happened on a large fire there would always be a man of sector boss caliber and that he would point out where to follow and give them directions. In general that covers my training.

GRANGER: I understand you gave this course to squad leaders and foreman and to jumpers with one year's experience.

SPACE: There may have been some first-year men.

GRANGER: Why not give it to the new men?

SPACE: I believe because they came in later and it was difficult to work into either their program or mine because I was tied up with ranger district training.

MAYS: You had about 150 new men to train this year. Would numbers not have had an effect on this?

SPACE: As I recall, the classes that I had this year, there were two, there were about 15 in each class. I wouldn't want a larger class. There were about 30 this year. I believe the smokejumpers have a definite record as to who took that course, but I don't have.

GRANGER: As I remember, 9 out of the 13, this was their first season. I would think it was as important for those fellows to get instructions as for men with greater experience.

SPACE: Perhaps so.

GUSTAFSON: That course you give is one strictly dealing with fire behavior as such and escape is something that is an off-shoot from a course of that type. Since the course is primarily in fire behavior it might be a reason too why first-year men are not in that particular course. It takes quite a bit of background to understand it.

SPACE: I think you are thinking of a course I gave to fire bosses here. I did give a course like that. This was scaled down and is not on the plane you are thinking of. These boys of course would not have understood that.

GRANGER: Were all the jumpers, new and old, given these instructions that when they got into a tight place that they should follow their leadership?

SPACE: All that I had anything to do with. But not all jumpers were in this course I gave but they got it in other courses.

COCHRAN: How much training in fire behavior is given generally to employees in the region who have fire control work to do. I am thinking of the work done by the Experiment Station too. They have results from their studies

as to what can be expected. How much is taken from them and incorporated into training for personnel such as rangers, assistant supervisors, staffmen, etc.?

SPACE: We have taken the information they have and at the time of our fire boss school I had Gisborne to help with the instructions.

COCHRAN: Is it given year after year or only occasionally?

SPACE: The first year we tried to give it to men who were more or less heads of fire control organizations on various forests with the thought that they in turn would go back to the forests and carry this instruction right on down the line. The following year I picked out individual fire bosses over the region that we felt would be in need of special fire boss training and gave them a course in being fire bosses.

COCHRAN: How long ago?

SPACE: Two and three years ago.

CROCKER: The Experiment Station has given us nothing on fire behavior since 1935. That was our danger meter which had in a small way included fire behavior. That includes the interpretation of certain elements and their influence on fire behavior.

**TESTIMONY OF WASHINGTON OFFICE SAFETY OFFICER JACKSON**

GRANGER: For the record, your name?

JACKSON: Seth Jackson, in charge of safety section in Washington office.

I first heard about the fire in Portland, Oregon, on the 6th of August, reading about it in a newspaper at 3 p.m. I went over to the regional office to get more information from Dispatcher Johnson but the office was closed. Received wire from McLaughlin and called him by long distance and decided to go back to the fire, arriving in Helena at 3 a.m. on August 7. I found Regional Forester Hanson waiting for a taxi to go out to the fire. I went out to Hilger Landing with him and helped set up radio and organize boats getting out to the fire area. I saw the first bodies flown out to Hilger Landing.

During all this time I attempted to get particulars of what happened. I wanted to fly into the tragedy area but stretchers would have to be removed from the helicopter which would slow up rescue operations, so I abandoned that scheme. Then I accompanied Supervisor Moir and Ranger Jansson to the Willow Mountain fire camp. That evening I stayed at Meriwether Camp with Clyde Blake. We met Gustafson there the following morning, August 8, and went to Willow Mountain Camp, then back to Helena where we interviewed Jansson.

August 9 we went out to Hilger Landing and flew to Mann Gulch saddle. Stackpole and Sagalyn of Life Magazine, and Elmer Bloom went with us. We covered the area in quite a lot of detail. Took photographs and returned to Helena about 2:30. We drove to Missoula with Crocker. The rest of the week, including Friday, we worked on the preliminary report which I air mailed to Mr. Loveridge Friday evening. I remained in Missoula until August 15 in order to cover anything else the Washington office might want.

While on the fire, I was naturally concerned about the safety angle. I checked for conformance with the 1948 Safety Code and interviewed as many men as I could. Safety apparently received careful consideration on this fire. Rescue operations were being handled very efficiently.

While studying this fire, let's look at the regional safety program a moment. I have been more or less intimately connected with Region One since 1940. Until the last 2 or 3 years, it had not been functioning too well. The two weeks before this catastrophe I made a detailed safety inspection of the region and was well pleased with what I saw. This tragedy is the first time in some 52,000 fires that we have had a Forest Service employee fatally burned in Region One and 31,000 fires since anyone was burned on a national forest fire in Region One. Two local cooperators were burned on the Knaiksu in 1926. (Figures supplied by Crocker.)

Only one other man was injured on the Mann Gulch fire. He had a wrenched back. With several hundred men working in some of the most rugged country in the United States, this is a remarkable record. Three years ago it probably would not have been the same story in this region.

I have made several flights with the smokejumpers in the past 10 years checking training and safety in the air as well as on the ground. I consider them a crack, well-trained group. I think they used good judgment in selecting the jump spot in Mann Gulch. If all had followed Dodge's instructions, probably they would be alive.

The Mann Gulch tragedy leads me to feel that we should emphasize escape methods and fire behavior in our training more than ever before. Another thing to consider in this region is that we have no serious fires in the eastern forests except very rarely. Should we train the men in the eastern forests to the same standards as those in the western forests where large fires are a more common occurrence, or should we consider sending in flying squadrons composed of key overhead experienced in firefighting under extreme conditions to assist the less experienced forests?

MOIR: I have written a little statement that to me has quite a little significance. (Moir read the following statement:)

"Montana east of the Continental Divide is not a high risk. Timber is patchy, broken up with open grassland and bare rock. Humus on the ground is only a thin layer and the trees themselves are small and provide much less fuel than our West Coast giants. Compared with Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California, or even western Montana, the east slope of the Rockies in Montana has far fewer fires per 1,000 acres of forest area. Fires are smaller, and because of less fuel, are more quickly controlled. Often a period of five or more years with favorable climatic conditions

will elapse when only a handful of very minor and easily controlled fires occur annually on each of our east and central Montana forests. This situation makes it extremely difficult for the Forest Service to justify the expenditure of large sums of money to maintain a fire protection force in eastern Montana adequate to take care of fires that occur in the occasional critical year.

"The severity of fires, and explosive quality of fuels in central Montana and east of the Continental Divide, has been repeatedly demonstrated. To my knowledge, only two men have been burned in forest fires in Idaho and western Montana since 1910. The east side toll of deaths, includes the West Fork of Teton fire, west of Choteau in 1931, where four men lost their lives; the Little Rockies fire in 1936 near Zortman where 3 men died; the Blackwater Canyon Fire south of Red Lodge (over the State line in Wyoming, Region Two) with 15 dead in 1937, and now the Mann Gulch fire with its toll of 13.

"Last year, 1948, upwards of 6,000 people visited the Meriwether Campground from every State in the Union. The popularity of this campground and the Gates-of-the-Mountains Wild Area behind it is growing yearly. The attraction is purely scenic. Unless the fire had been promptly fought, Meriwether campground and the entire canyon behind it would have gone up in smoke - scenic values would have been destroyed for generations to come. It is difficult to translate these values in terms of dollars, but the amounts at stake were far greater than any equal acreage of saw timber that would eventually be harvested for lumber.

"The York fire occurring simultaneously with the Mann Gulch fire forced a division in our firefighting efforts. This fire not only threatened ranch homes and livestock, but ten million feet of timber plus the tremendous scenic and recreation values in Trout Creek Canyon."

## RECOMMENDATIONS BY SUPERVISOR MOIR

MOIR: Several items which the Helena thought should be considered:

1. We felt that there should be definite pre-arrangement between the smokejumpers and the various forests so that on a fire such as we experienced in Mann Gulch the forest would be expected to take. I mean that we did not know in Helena about what action to expect in that case. Assuming that the jumpers were landed all right, if they found themselves in the far end of the blow-up whether they would be expected to work on that section of line or immediately leave to contact the ground force. Clear understanding is needed on that point. It might be physically impossible to send a messenger because of water, cliffs and fire.

GRANGER: It is my understanding it was understood by ground crew that they were to hook up with the smokejumpers.

MOIR: They were a long ways from the ground crew.

GRANGER: Failure of minds to meet there on that point. Do you think that the regional office jumped at conclusions that they should not have arrived at?

MOIR: When you have a blow-up you can't tell how large a fire is going to be. I still personally don't know whether it would be duty of a sizable smokejumper crew to hit line at nearest point even though they might be several miles away from the ground force was on fire.

CROCKER: Moir has a good point there all right. Principle of smokejumper organization is that it is a small fire outfit and when they get out of that category, as these did then, it is a project fire. Smokejumper instructions tell them in a case of this kind to contact the nearest ground force and tie in with them. Can't criticize action because it was normal.

MAYS: That thing is confusing. The only difference between smokejumpers and regular suppression crews is means of transportation. If on a truck they usually have to go past ranger headquarters or fire camp. Smokejumpers and others are turned over to the forest just as soon as they get on the ground. Because these boys are smokejumpers we confuse the

organization pattern when actually it is same as for any other crew. Even a truck load of firefighters could come in the back way to a fire without passing a place where instructions are issued.

GRANGER: If smokejumpers land in vicinity of fire and fire gets beyond their facilities should they, (1) seek the nearest ground crew to find out what plan for entire fire is, or (2) should they proceed to what they consider the strategic point of fire and go to work.

CROCKER: All our instructions read that they will try to do both, simultaneously.

MOIR: My point is that there should be more definite understanding between the smokejumper organization and the forest as to what might be expected of large smokejumper crews after they arrive on large fire reaching project proportions. Whether they might expect to go to work as crew until they were contacted by the ground force.

BLAKE: How about the reverse. Why not just as important for ground crew to contact aerial force?

MOIR: Whole point should be cleared.

2. There should be a much more conscious effort to advise the forest when jumpers are jumped to fires, as to exact location where they jumped.

GRANGER: Statement here that indicated that Helena was advised at the time, 5:15 p.m., that the jump had been completed successfully and that they were also advised as to location of jump.

MOIR: Not disputing statement but our records do not bear it out.

CROCKER: Forest was called and given what information they wanted.

MOIR: According to our dispatcher, the few times he has been advised, of completion of jumps, he has never been advised as to exact location where jump was made, until jump made after Mann Gulch fire.

3. If radio carried along for jumper use their radio chute should be sufficiently marked so that spotter can tell if it reached ground safely. Spare radio and chute should always be carried.

4. Any smokejumper group should be supplied with maps of the area where jump is to be made.

5. Then we get back to our own situation in supervisor's office. We discovered in the light of this experience that our communication facilities, particularly our telephone set-up, were wholly inadequate, for that kind of emergency. We had two trunk lines come into our office which served not only the supervisor's office but also one district ranger and we had no radio although steps are now being taken to correct that. This has been the situation ever since I have been on the forest. It has been reasonably adequate in the past. Did not realize how inadequate until August 5. The dispatcher was in one room, executive assistant in another, Helena District Ranger dispatcher in third, and myself in a fourth, and all struggling to use the phone. Bad situation. One of the reasons we did not get information we should have received. On top of that the Canyon Ferry telephone that we have to depend on is a party line with large numbers of people using it. Even on normal days we frequently have to wait one or more hours to get through to them. That particular night, as was quite natural, we were deluged with outside calls of people wanting work, people wanting to know about the fire, etc., and result was that our communication system completely went to pieces. We need to have arrangements made so that in just a few minutes in emergency we can hook up additional lines and 3 or 4 phones in same room instead of widely separated.

6. Next point is perhaps not too pertinent to this inquiry. Present decision is that we cannot employ tractors that are not equipped with canopies on fire control work. In our particular situation that almost means that we can't use tractors on fire. When we need them we need them sooner than they can be secured from Missoula.

7. We think possibly more attention should be given, even some conferences between foreman of smokejumper crews and spotters, to plan an escape route in case of fire blow-up before they leave plane. Perhaps that is being done. Don't know.

8. Another thing that we feel turned out to be major difficulty in case of Mann Gulch fire is the fact that forest has no boat for getting back and forth between Hilger and other part of forest inaccessible by any other means but water transportation. During night of August 5 our lack of boats and lack of communication made things difficult. No communication at all at Hilger. Can't tell when boat is there or when not there. Depend

entirely on small group of businessmen who may be available there and give us transportation.

GRANGER: Any further suggestions from forest men?

EATON: It would help us if a bulldozer unit could be made available on call when needed so that quicker action with one or more bulldozer units can be taken. Another thing, this fire appears to show a need for more use of FM radio network on such fires to give communication from sector to sector and camp to camp, fire boss to sector boss, etc.

JANSSON: Possibly the region has it, but not in hands of east side rangers, that is written information such as we incorporate in Fireman's Guide of use we can expect from smokejumpers. We don't have any information except what we learn from hand to mouth on it. In Fireman's Guide it could be covered, how organization is set up, what force responsible, etc.

BLAKE: Use of dozers is covered in Safety Code. -"Tractors, bulldozers, etc., used in dangerous timbered country, or in places where there is danger of falling objects, must be equipped with canopy which will protect the driver from falling saplings, limbs, rocks, etc."

MOIR: Since Mann Gulch fire we have put in request for interpretation of language on use of canopies on tractors. Needed.

CROCKER: It would cost \$60,000 for bulldozers to be put on stand-by. Can't finance. The same thing applies to telephone communications. One of those office communication systems costs around \$35 or \$40 a month. Boat is in same category. We don't have entire region equipped and it is a matter of putting equipment where most needed.

JANSSON: The boat is particularly important. Had a boy with a snake bite a few years ago and it was difficult to get him out. If we are to continue to work men in the area we should have some means of getting them out in emergency.

GRANGER: All you could afford would be a small boat. Not big enough for transporting fire crews.

MOIR: But it could be equipped with radio for communication and give better results with rest of boats we might employ in an emergency.

PRICE: Would it not have been practical to set up a radio at the landing?

MOIR: That was done - after critical period.

EATON: I did not have in mind stationing a dozer unit in Helena. If there was perhaps one or two in Missoula ready to go.

CROCKER: There are.

**TESTIMONY OF SMOKEJUMPER FOREMAN LUFKIN**

Granger asked Mr. Lufkin if he had any comments to make.

LUFKIN: I had several questions to begin with but they have all come out in the review. As far as I know they have been very well answered. My only comment is upon selection of jump spot. I was glad to have had the opportunity to fly over it. In my own opinion anyone with experience would have selected given spot. As far as safety for men and landing, taking advantage of topographical chart of the country would afford easiest landings. In that area they had preference between trees or open ground landing. In their training they are given considerable jump into timber as well as open ground and given considerable instruction in relieving themselves of equipment and getting out of any type of tree that they might select or one into which they landed.

## TESTIMONY OF WASHINGTON OFFICE CHIEF OF FIRE CONTROL GUSTAFSON

On August 6 I was on the Los Padres Forest with Frank Jefferson. We were going to inspect the Los Padres aerial program. En route to the airport we received information to the effect that a fire had started to blow on the San Luis District. We immediately returned to Santa Barbara, at which place Mr. Jefferson placed a call to San Francisco to Mr. Baxter, administrative assistance in Fire Control at that location, to report that the San Luis fire would probably be difficult to control. While he was talking to Baxter on the phone, Baxter mentioned he would like to talk to me and I was informed that two smokejumpers were injured in connection with smoke jumping on a fire on the Helena Forest. At that time I instructed Baxter to call Missoula and have a message available to me at San Luis Obispo which is some 80 miles up coast. We proceeded immediately to San Luis Obispo and on arriving at that location I received a message from Mr. Baxter. I do not have it with me but I believe at that time I was informed that there were 5 smokejumpers know dead and several missing. This was late in the afternoon on August 6.

Boarded a plane and arrived to San Francisco about 8 p.m. Previous to departure from San Luis Obispo I asked Jefferson to call Mr. Baxter instructing Mr. Baxter to call Mr. Loveridge in Washington to determine what he knew of this tragedy. On arriving in San Francisco there was a message waiting for me at the airport. I think it was that time that night August 6. Sunday, August 7, I boarded a plane at 2:50 a.m. for Missoula arriving in Missoula somewhat close to noon and arrived at the Missoula regional office shortly before lunch, at which place I met Mr. Space and other members of the Region One organization. Mr. Space and I departed for Helena, Montana arriving there later that afternoon. At 4:30 p.m. I met Regional Forester Hanson at Helena who reported that all bodies had been recovered and were positively identified. Mr. Hanson departed shortly thereafter with the rescue crew for Missoula and I did not see Mr. Hanson again until my return to Missoula a few days later. The remainder of that day, August 7, was spent getting information as to location of fire and getting acquainted with what had happened, not making any effort to question anyone at that time. Also that afternoon Mr. Space and I proceeded to Hilger Landing because it was difficult to communicate to Meriwether from Helena and at that point make arrangements to meet Seth Jackson and Clyde Blake early the next morning at Meriwether. That concludes the August 7 information of any particular value.

August 8.- Early in the morning Space and I proceeded to Hilgers boat landing with intention of proceeding to Meriwether where we were to meet Clyde Blake and Seth Jackson. There wasn't a suitable boat at the landing at that time and during the interim in which an attempt was made to get a boat Clayton Crocker came up river, landing at Hilger. Mr. Crocker stated that he had received a radio message from Helena stating that there was another bad fire developing on the Helena National Forest. Since the boat that he had used would necessarily have to be available for him to return down river, we felt that we should not take it because we did not know how long he would be gone. We returned to Helena with Clayton Crocker and upon arriving at the supervisor's office found the reported fire was not bad. We returned to Hilger boat landing and due to the fact that Clayton Crocker was on Helena fire Space was there also, Crocker requested Space to return to Missoula to take care of any new fire situation that may develop elsewhere in the region.

We proceeded down river to Meriwether camp at which place we met Clyde Blake and Seth Jackson and thence down to fire camp on Willow Creek. We had an opportunity to view the organization in action on that side of the fire and it was easy to see they had complete control of the situation. The fire at that time was quite treacherous. We then (Seth Jackson, Clyde Blake, and I) returned to the boat and about the time we took off for Hilger Landing Mrd. Moir who had just arrived from Helena handed me a telegram signed by Loveridge requesting me to make a detailed preliminary investigation of the accident; also requesting me to discuss an early date for a formal board of review with Regional Forester Hanson.

We then returned to Helena at which time information on the fire as far as we knew at that time was dispatched to Loveridge in Washington. Interviewed Ranger Jansson (Clyde Blake, Seth Jackson, and myself). Also we arranged to have Supervisor Moir prepare a statement concerning his actions on the tragedy and requested Missoula to have Dodge, Cooley, Sallee, Ramsey, and others prepare their statements in rough draft form so that they would be available for discussion. We then made arrangements to enter the fire area the next morning where the tragedy occurred.

On August 9 we arrived at Hilger boat landing shortly after 5:30 a.m. About that time Stackpole and Sagalyn of Life Magazine were there and Elmer Bloom also. The plan was to go into the fire area where the tragedy occurred and Mr. Blake, Myself, Seth Jackson, and Life Magazine men, more or less in that rotation, would make trips with the helicopter in there. The first trip took 16 minutes. It took a little while to have the men all brought into the saddle in the fire area where the tragedy occurred, but we were ready for the trip through the Mann Gulch area shortly after 7 o'clock that morning.

We followed the slope of the hill more or less on a contour where the tragedy occurred. The slope was open with a few scattered trees looking down towards Mann Gulch draw. Various pictures were taken both by Life photographer and Seth Jackson and Clyde Blake. Near our route of travel we kept seeing the rock monuments where crosses now are where bodies were picked up. It was my belief that I should go into this area before interviewing Dodge, Sallee, Rumsey, or Mr. Hanson to see if I could not reconstruct what had happened with information obtained from observations in the area. The thing I was worried about was the effect of the escape fire on possible escape of the men themselves. That was one of the things that bothered me. I proceeded in advance and attempted to select where I thought the fire should have occurred and drew a map of fire area very roughly. The escape area, made on the ground at the time we were in there. that is the only place along the slope that a fire did not burn with as tremendous heat as the major fire that passed over. The Life Magazine men, of course, were with us at all these critical points taking pictures, asking questions, one taking pictures and the other taking notes as captions for the pictures. After we had identified Dodge's escape fire I advanced ahead towards the mouth of Mann Gulch trying to follow the path that I thought possibly the boys might have been following coming from that direction.

After proceeding about 1000 feet I ran into some tools underneath a canopy of ponderosa pine timber rather scattered. I ran into 7 shovels and 6 pulaskis in the rock slide where the trees were growing. I did not know at that time the men were double tooled but these pulaskis and shovels were in a circle, the diameter of which would not exceed 100 feet, indicating to me that at that particular point most of the men must have been in close proximity to one another. It later developed heavy equipment had been abandoned. Later the two 5-gallon water containers and a couple of saws could still be seen within the 100-foot circle so you could assume that the men were close together as a unit and not stampeding at the time. We did not proceed much further down along the slope of Mann Gulch. I paced out distance from place men discarded their tools to dropping area. It was difficult to be accurate but I would say it was about 28 chains. We arrived at the dropping area and it was quite evident that the cargo and parachute equipment were stored in an orderly fashion at that point, indication again to me, and I think also to the Life Magazine people and others present, that there was not any worry at that time because if there had been worry men could not take time to store cargo and parachutes neatly. We returned to mouth of Mann Gulch at about 11:00 a.m. and to Meriwether Landing at which place we had lunch.

Clayton Crocker, Clarence Strong, and other members of Region One organization, assistant supervisor in charge of fire control on the Flathead Forest and Ranger Jansson were there. They held a council of war concerning operations on the fire.

We returned to Hilger landing and arrived at Helena at which place I picked up Moir's statement and returned to Missoula, 5:30 p.m., August 9.

August 10, I worked in the office in Missoula primarily with Clyde Blake and Seth Jackson getting statements, preparing report, and summing up our findings. At that time, August 10 or previous to that, learned that pictures had been taken of the trip by Elmer Bloom and I requested Region One to seal this film and send to Washington where it would be developed and distributed as Chief saw fit. I understand that was done.

August 11 worked on report such as rounding out statements, tying in facts, etc.

On August 10 or 11 we had conference with Dodge concerning his statement and later a conference with Life men. Conference was held with them when Dodge was present lasting 9:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

We earlier had asked Dodge to show us on map where cargo base area was. He located it. We asked him where he had men drop tools. He located it right where we knew it was. We asked him where he had set fire and he located it almost in the identical place we had previously located it. He did not know we knew specifically where these points were.

August 12 received a telegram from Region Four stating that the Hunt's Gulch fire was not looking too good and Floyd Godden would be in McCall that morning. There was considerable fear here that fire would jump river and be on Region One side so Ralph Space, Pete Hanson, and myself went to McCall passing as near as possible to fire. There was too much smoke to see well.

August 13, 2:10 p.m. I left for Washington and report was received in Washington by Loveridge on August 14, 1 p.m.

GRANGER: This appears to conclude the portion of this undertaking which involves taking testimony, receiving suggestions, and comments so that we will consider that phase of the inquiry concluded except for tomorrow when we will have Mr. Thol, the father of one of the boys who was lost, before the board and the board will shortly go into executive session to work out a further plan of procedure.

**TESTIMONY OF HENRY J. THOL**  
**(Father of One of the Victims)**

THOL: First off, whatever I say here, any statements I make, not just myself, I don't know how some of the other parents feel. I am not responsible for it at all.

GRANGER: I might say on that though, that we extended an invitation to the other parents in this general locality to come before us if they wish to do so, none of them wishes to do so.

THOL: O.K., That's all right. I didn't know that. I didn't know whether I'm standing here alone, or what, that's O.K.

GRANGER: Well, would you like to go ahead and make some kind of a statement?

THOL: Well, my statement, I repeat the statement I made to Senator Murray in my letter, I couldn't offhand give you the date. It's an answer to Mr. Watts' letter. In Mr. Watts' letter he referred to me Mr. Mather, who is the father of Mrs. William Hellman. He previously had written to State Senator Murray asking him for an investigation and this letter signed by Mr. Watts; the statements he made I cannot possibly agree to that at all. It does not state good facts.

GRANGER: Now what statements do you feel are in error?

THOL: The statement I did make in my letter - I have the copies of the letter here. Now here is a letter from State Senator Murray to Mr. R. A. Mather, I have already stated he is the father of Mrs. William Hellman. Now Mr. Mather just wrote to Senator Ecton for an explanation of the investigation. Now here is Senator Murray's answer:

"Dear Mr. Mather:

"For your information I enclose herewith self-explanatory letter which I have just received from the Chief of the Forest Service and in which you will be interested."

With best wishes I am,

Sincerely yours,  
Senator Murray"

Here is the answer by Mr. Watts to Mr. Murray in answer to his request for investigation.

GRANGER: What is the date of that letter?

THOL: The date is August 30th.

"Honorable James E. Murray, U. S. Senate

"Dear Senator:

"We have your communication of August 15 enclosing a letter by Mr. R. A. Mather of Kalispell, Montana relative to the recent fire disaster in Helena National Forest, Montana.

"Mann Gulch fire which caused the lives of 13 men was discovered at 12:25 p.m., August 5th. The fire was started by lightning. A ground crew of men was dispatched, reaching the fire at 4:30. Because of the inaccessible terrain the ranger and supervisor also requested aid of smokejumpers from Missoula. Sixteen men were dispatched. Their plane reached the fire at 3:10 p.m. The men started to jump at 3:50 p.m. and all jumps were completed by 4:10. Fifteen men jumped. One man who became sick during the flight stayed in the plane. Some newspaper accounts may have given the impression that the men parachuted into the fire-----

THOL: I haven't seen nothing like that --

"Actually the smokejumper operation had little to do with the tragedy that occurred. The men landed on the flank of the fire --  
-

THOL: I wish you would remember some of these statements --

"1/2 mile from the burning area. At the time the fire covered only 60 acres and it was not spreading rapidly. It was not until nearly two hours later that a blow-up occurred. The same thing could have happened had the men gone to the fire on foot as one of those killed by the fire had done so. The thirteen men who lost their lives were all seasoned fire fighters, all had two or more years experience at fire fighting, all but one, three or more years. The fire control operations were planned and the fire was attacked in accordance with methods that had been employed through years of experience and have proved effective in thousands of fires in the regions. So far we have found no evidence of any major error or derelictions of duty to which the tragedy could be attributed. However, a thorough investigation by a board of review will be held just as soon as the fire situation eases up enough so that personnel will be available."

Sincerely  
Watts"

THOL: This letter was sent to me through Senator Murray. Now I answered that letter. I don't have the letter here, so I'll just do the best I can. I have copies of all this correspondence. In case I have to mail out copies to anyone interested I am prepared to do so. Here's my letter to Mr. Murray in answer to the letter I just read.

GRANGER: What's the date of this letter?

THOL: September 9 - Kalispell, Montana.

"Honorable James E. Murray, U. S. Senate  
Washington, D. C.

"Dear Senator:

"Yesterday, Mr. R. A. Mather, 1145 Third Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana, handed me your letter of August 31 to which was attached a letter under date of August 30, I-Information, General by the Chief of the Forest Service, Mr. Lyle E. Watts, regarding the tragic Mann Gulch fire in Helena Forest of Montana.

"Dear Senator, I wish to inform you that the statements made by Mr. Watts are entirely lacking of true facts and circumstances involved in this fire. The statements are nothing more than a cover-up and to withhold from the public true facts. The tragic death of thirteen men is the result of negligence and inexperience, on the part of the Forest Service overhead personnel in charge. I am the father of Henry Thol, Jr., one of the fire victims. On August 16, Mr. James Hellman, father of William Hellman, second fire victim, and I went to Mann Gulch fire area and made our own investigation of the fire. On August 29, I made a second examination. Our conclusions are based on thirty or more years of experience of fire control operations. The jumpers were placed a short distance in front of a rapidly spreading deathly fire trap, and on top, to place human life. The tragic death of thirteen men is the result of inexperience, lack of common sense on the part of overhead personnel in charge. I am prepared to debate the issue at a public hearing and prove to the public the negligence on the part of the Forest Service. So far, the information given to the public and to the parents of the unfortunate victims has been incomplete. Dear Senator, I wish that this incident be given further attention. Yesterday I have written to the Chief of Forest Service, Washington, D. C., asking for a copy of the 82 page report of this fire. This report was prepared and submitted to the Chief by the investigating force offices at Missoula, Montana."

I signed it -

Yours,  
Henry Thol

That is my answer to Mr. Watts' letter.

GRANGER: Now could you tell us, quite specifically in what respect the statements in Mr. Watts' letter are in error.

THOL: He did not state that the fire was spreading. The fire was not spreading - only covered 60 acres and not spreading. He did not state the time of the day which is the most risky time of the day.

GRANGER: Now just a minute, lets' take these one by one. What did you say about the fire [rest of page was cut off]

THOL: Actually, the smokejumper operation had little to do with the trapping on the fire. Well that's true, I admit that, it's true. It's just a routine performance like they do all over, that's right. The men landed on the flank of the fire -

GRANGER: Now read the rest of the sentence -

THOL: A half a mile from the burning area.

GRANGER: That's correct isn't it?

THOL: Flanks, theres all sorts of flanks, what's considered a safe flank, what's considered a risky flank, the fact is the men were landed in front of the fire, in the gulch, in the bottom to which the fire would drift any moment, the prevailing wind should spring up.

GRANGER: Well, was not the fire up, pretty well up on top of the ridge and only slightly down on the side of the ridge when the jump was made?

THOL: It was pretty well down on the side of the ridge, I have an aerial picture, see, that was shown in Life Magazine, which quite plainly shows that the fire was in Mann Gulch down the side and also the fire was blowing pretty well -- the picture indicates pretty well that fire was going; it was blowing up pretty badly.

GRANGER: Well, all of the evidence we have had was that the time the jump was made the fire was not moving rapidly, it was up on top of the ridge and a short distance down the sides but was not showing any great activity at that time.

THOL: It shows on the diagram, it shows that the fire was down in Mann Gulch and part of it was along the top of the divide sloping into Meriwether.

GRANGER: When you say down in Mann Gulch - now what do you mean, specifically?

THOL: I have so many letters here -- Now here's a prepared diagram. It shows that a fire is in Mann Gulch and on a slope into Mann Gulch. Here is Mann Gulch and the fire sloped down into Mann Gulch.

GRANGER: What map is that?

GUSTAFSON: That's the one I prepared.

THOL: This was prepared here at this office.

GUSTAFSON: I prepared that map but it was not drawn to scale but merely to diagrametrically show position of fire at 3:10 p.m. and approximately movement at lower end of fire across Mann Gulch which forced retreat of smokejumper crew.

GRANGER: Now, Mr. Thol, do you think this diagram of the fire at the time the plane went over the area is wrong as to where the fire was?

THOL: It may be wrong, it may be right, because they only looked at it from the top. This is all heavily timbered, from the bottom of the gulch -- shows the fire is all heavily timbered - the ground is all like that, heavily timbered, and no one can definitely say that this was the fire edge at that time. Might be smoke only showed here, appeared here through the timber, but no living person can definitely say that was the flank of the fire, the fire at that time might have been pretty well down to the bottom, still it did not show up because smoke will trail through the timber for quite a distance before it rises to the top and is visible.

GRANGER: Now you assert, as I understand it, that they landed in front of the fire.

THOL: Yes, this was the front of the fire, here.

GRANGER: Bear in mind that it is the ridge up here, the fire was pretty well up on the ridge. The ridge goes off in this direction.

THOL: Yes, That's right, here is the saddle, here is the low saddle. I came in this way - came in over Elkhorn Creek and came over the top and came down on to the fire. While the men in the plane scouted the fire, the natural heat, the drift did have to go up and at any moment if the wind should change, which is liable at any time at that time of the day in the afternoon between 4 and 5 o'clock, at any time, the fire would come right across and put these men right in front of the fire. There is nothing else that could happen. That is the natural general drift of the fire, and no one - no one living person can state, "the wind won't blow now, we are perfectly safe, we can go in there, we won't have no wind." There's no living person make such a statement.

GRANGER: No, I don't think anyone has attempted to say that it is perfectly safe; what they have said was that it was no different from any other situations in which fire fighters are taken.

THOL: Concerning this flank and these conditions I can't call it a flank of the fire. Like I told Mr. Dodge and perhaps Mr. Hanson, you probably remember at the time you had the meeting, I pinned Dodge down. "Dodge are you absolutely sure there wasn't any fire down at the bottom when you flew over it?" He said, "I couldn't see anything." After a check on lookout fire reports you will find quite a number of cases that a lookout reports a fire in a timbered area, the definite spot. Then when the crew gets to the fire the fire may be two - three hundred feet or as much as a quarter of a mile in a different place, because the smoke may trail along the bottom through the heavy green timber until finally it shows up. Because the fire smoke is at this spot that doesn't actually mean it's 100% correct - here's the fire, the fire may be way down on the bottom. In this case, in that area, it is quite evident that such a

thing happened that they didn't see the boundary of the fire, the boundary of the fire might have been way below, the rocky nature of these slopes here in the heavy timber, the hot rocks roll, roll on down - get loose; they loosened off the ground and keep on rolling. Pine cones go down and it's such a slope it will reach the bottom. That's only smaller there and is not visible, because it's in the green timber.

GRANGER: Well, each one of these men who were interviewed said the same thing about where the fire was as they saw it, when they flew over and started the jump, and each one said he saw no spot fires anywhere outside the main fire.

THOL: That's possible; that is their own opinion and I don't discredit the idea, probably that was their own observation as it looked to them. No doubt, I can't dispute them at all. But that doesn't say there was no fire. I would like to refer you to a little case that happened in about '43. I mention to you here. I was stationed at Big Prairie, that was my last year in the Service. At that time we had eight or ten smokejumpers. The fire call was received - we had a fire at Meadow Creek. The plane was dispatched with four jumpers and they jumped on this fire. I was along on this trip - Mr. Dodge and these jumpers - there was the pilot. We had the exact location of this fire - it was an old fire - it wasn't just a lightning fire. It had been smoldering for two or three days. If you check these reports you will find that's what I'm telling is a fact. All right, we knew the location of the fire. It was in the pocket of the Mid Creek. We circled the fire several times - we couldn't find no fire - just about at a point to give it up - made another cruise around. One of the men just saw a faint little something blue show up. That fire was an acre and a quarter at the time. We couldn't see it, because the smoke didn't show up. Repeatedly in the past number of years planes have been dispatched to fires, and came back - no fire - what's the matter with the lookout; because at the time the plane was flying over, smoke was lying so close to the ground it didn't come up from along the ground to the top of the green timber. Therefore, I repeat my statement because the men felt in their own minds, I don't dispute, that's what they saw. There was no assurance that there was no fire below - fire down to the bottom of the gulch and road at any moment to take up only waiting for just a whiff of wind to get the thing started, which it did at 5:00 o'clock - it already was across. Ranger Jansson states there they are also facts, that they say at the time Dodge ordered his men to go down the river, fire already had crossed. Then the whole thing blew up and was no escape for the men. There was no provision made when these men landed there, they dropped out of the blue sky. They didn't know anything - where to go in case of a blow-up - didn't know, and that fact has been proved because Dodge, when he did finally realize the thing was too risky, instead of giving the boys a chance, (the breaks to get out of that trap) he lead them deeper into the trap. I have pictures here to prove my statements.

GRANGER: What do you mean by that?

THOL: He did not know, he had any idea whatsoever of what was going on below, because the whole thing was blind to him. He didn't know any idea what this terrain was like. He couldn't see that.

GRANGER: What should he have done?

THOL: I'll show you a picture here - right from the cargo camp, this ridge - only a short distance - only a quarter of a mile was begging to them - "here we are boys, come over here." He didn't recognize and appreciate that fact.

GRANGER: Now at what time should he have taken them over there?

THOL: The last minute when he realized - get out and leading the - all the men into something he had no idea whatsoever he was running into - cliffs or what in the world was ahead of him. Right here to the top of that ridge, he could of, - he had plenty of time to prepare a place and all of the men would have been saved.

GRANGER: Are you speaking now of the time when he started the crew down the gulch?

THOL: It should have been done before - what he should have - looked around and found some avenue of escape in case something should go wrong, which he did not do.

GRANGER: Well, of course, he had sized up all of the country in that vicinity when they were cruising around deciding where to jump. He knew the general nature of the country, both from the plane and after he got down. As to the steepness of the slope and the character of the cover on both sides of the Mann Gulch.

THOL: Well, looking down at the ground from the plane, one doesn't always get a true idea of what the ground is like. You don't, the thing is flat. He can't see really what's on the ground - it's misleading. But after he did get on the ground, he should have recognized the risk, the high risk he and these men were in. He should have known and at least made some effort to locate an avenue of escape. What could have happened - they were lucky - while these men were landing - some no doubt were in trees. Sometimes it will take a while for a man to lower himself to the ground and then get out of his chute. If at that time the wind would have sprung up, those boys would've been burned alive right in their chutes.

GRANGER: Well, now I would like to get this point clear as to just when you think Dodge should have done something different with respect of where he took the men, then he did do.

THOL: Right here, at least right here - then he met up with Hellman when the crew left the camp. Hellman's instructions were to go to the fire. In the meantime Dodge went over to find out who was calling here. We met Harrison. Then he came back and overtook Hellman. Hellman was on the

north side of the gulch - his instructions to go to the fire. Then he changed his instructions - go down the gulch to the river. At that time he realized things were going to blow up - he knew that, because he changed his instructions, and at that point all the men saw this open rocky ridge which is only a short distance from the camp to the ridge is perhaps slightly over a quarter of a mile. Another point -

GRANGER: Now, just a minute, did you say then at that time, he should have taken the men over the ridge?

THOL: Yes, at least there they had one chance.

GRANGER: You said that he knew then the fire was going to blow up. He stated, that at that time he thought the best thing to do from the standpoint of safety and correct fire procedure was to go down and start fighting the fire on the flank down the gulch, but he took the men down over a course from which they could watch the behavior of the fire on the opposite slope so they would be prepared as well as could be to govern their actions according to the behavior of the fire. But there's no evidence that the behavior of the fire when he rejoined Hellman and the crew pointed to a blow-up.

THOL: Well, he instructed the crew to go down the river. He could not see the lower end of the gulch.

GRANGER: That's right.

THOL: Fire at that time already had crossed.

GRANGER: But there was nothing to make him aware of that fact, that as to when the fire crossed the lower end of the gulch.

THOL: Not knowing what was going on below - then I'll say this. As far as he was concerned, the value of a human life didn't mean much. He took that big, big risk. So rather than take the easier way out, more definite, more surer way out, take the men to the top of the ridge.

GRANGER: Well, I guess that's a matter of a judgment of one man against another isn't it, as to how serious this situation was at that time?

THOL: Well, it comes back to lack of good common horse sense and experience. That's my answer to that. To begin with, when these men were ordered to go into the fire - what could he have done on this hot spreading fire? what could he have done? With 15 men there - that time of the day when the fire was going? And as you know, the wind could whip up any time, it indicates right there he did not understand big size scale fire operations.

GRANGER: Well, we'll have to accept that as your judgment of his experience and knowledge - that may or may not be a correct estimate.

THOL: It was a dry enough area and grass. It was a typical, typical set-up

for a trap, absolutely, and anyone who has ever been through grass fires even on the prairie ground knows what a grass fire means. And under this condition here, it was so much tougher on account of these slopes and the draw of the canyon. The canyon was running east and west with the prevailing wind. He should make doubly sure - try to look for an avenue of escape and protect the human life first.

GRANGER: All right, we have that point then, your central point is you feel he made a mistake, a grave mistake when he didn't turn the crew over the ridge at the time he rejoined the crew and Hellman.

THOL: Yes, that's the way I feel - grave mistake made there. At that time, there was plenty - enough time to go to the top of the ridge and prepare a place and save the men.

GRANGER: Do you feel the jump should not have been made in the area?

THOL: No, not at that time of the day, and under such a condition and in such a place.

HANSON: You meant it shouldn't have been made.

THOL: Should not have been made at that time of the day and under such a condition and in such a place.

HANSON: How do you think we should, or do you think we should fight that fire - how do you think we should fight that fire?

THOL: You should have more ground information: what the fire was like from the ground covering the hazard and the rate of spread in that area; time of day and considering the dryness.

HANSON: You don't think we should attempt to have fought that fire that way?

THOL: No - not put your jumpers in there at that time, at such a place unless a safe place was previously prepared so they could say, "if something goes wrong, boys, here's the place we go." Or if it had been an old fire, perhaps a day or two old with a lot of cold places along the fire line, I wouldn't object to that so much. Because men have a place to retreat to, and save themselves. And in this case they did have nothing!

GRANGER: All right then, we have two specific points. The first one is that the jump should not have been made at all at that time of day under prevailing conditions. The second is that the jump having been made that the men should have been taken out of the area at the time Dodge rejoined the crew after having been up on the hill and contacting Harrison.

THOL: Yes.

GRANGER: Now, you have said in your letter that there are a great many errors of fact. What other misstatements are there in the letter?

THOL: The fire was there not spreading.

GRANGER: On what do you base your assertion that it was spreading?

THOL: The fire was discovered shortly after 12 o'clock by the boatman down at the Hilger's Landing. About 10 minutes later a lookout 30 miles distant discovered the fire. At the same time District Ranger Jansson was in a patrol trip in a plane. He got back from his trip to the Helena airfield; I don't know exactly where the airfield is - I imagine near Helena which is about a distance of 10 - 15 mile airline distance from the fire. While he was getting out of the plane, looking back he discovered this fire. He'd just been over the area looking for fires - so he got back to the plane and circled over the fire and his own estimate was eight acres at, I believe, it was 12:55 -- 8 acres, and two hours later, less than that, the plane flew over and they only estimated 60 acres. So that fire - it was spreading - that fire was spreading.

GRANGER: I don't know that anybody said it was not spreading at all, but --

THOL: Well, this letter states at the time the fire covered only 60 acres and was not spreading rapidly.

GRANGER: Well, that's right - rapidly. That was the combined judgment of all of those who made observation from the plane before the jump was made.

THOL: But here are the time elements. From shortly after 12:00 o'clock to 3:30 the fire had spread 50 - 60 acres or estimates. That doesn't take into consideration fire which might already have been down the slope quite a distance.

GRANGER: That statement in the letter is based upon the statements made by these men both previous to this board of review and during our session here as their opinion that the fire was not spreading rapidly at that time.

THOL: Well, I can't answer that. Like you say, they stated that was their opinion - how much value their opinion has in this respects I couldn't answer that - as far as they are personally concerned I couldn't answer that, but anytime a fire from at noon to 3:10 covers 50 - 60 acres, visible, you seen his own statements - if that fire isn't spreading, I like to know what it is doing. Now, may I say this here - I'm not here to hold a grudge, in anyway or shape, what I am trying to do, as I already have stated before - I'm going to put all my effort into it to make things better so that a thing like that will not happen again - that's the whole purpose of my efforts.

GRANGER: That's right - that's what we all want.

THOL: Not to hang anybody at all, the boys are gone, they can never be replaced, but that's what I am going to do - I will not stop, and help do my share that a thing like this will not happen again.

GRANGER: That's right. Now have you other points on which you think there were misstatements in the letter?

THOL: The 13 men who lost their lives were seasoned fire fighters. All had two or more years experience at fire fighting - all but one - three or four more years. Well, as far as their being experienced fire fighters - impossible for anyone - a young lad, because he has been on fire operations - smokejumpers - small fires - worked on the districts perhaps a year or two - that does not make him an experienced fire fighter. In the case of these men, they followed their instructions - instructions that were handed out to them by the foreman. My own boy spent two years on the Condon District as fire guard. I know him - I know him well - this I say of my own boy - he was a long long way from an experienced fire fighter. He barely could handle tools. He could handle tools well, but as far as being productive in handling tools, well he was not - and most of these boys - pretty much in the same category. My own boy stated this - last time I saw him: "Well soon I will have to make my test jump - and I think I'll make it all right; time will tell." Two weeks later - I wasn't home, he told the wife then, "Well I'm sure fine, I made the grade. Some of the boys, quite a number of the boys didn't make it - they did all right on jumping but they were too poor with the tools - they needed additional training." And he himself wasn't any too good with the tools. He was nineteen years old, raised in town like most of those boys are. Their instructions and training in the taking care of a small fire does not make him an experienced fire fighter at all.

GRANGER: Suppose, for the sake of argument, we agree that the statement that they were all seasoned fire fighters may be a little overdrawn - would that have any bearing on what actually happened?

THOL: No, it would not - they could have been an entirely green crew you picked up from the street - it would have been the same thing. They were under the supervision and direction of the foreman.

GRANGER: Now, do you think that if the crew had been made up of men that you would classify as experienced fire fighters that would have made any difference in what they did and the final result?

THOL: Not in this respect because as long as they are under the supervision and direction of the foreman they had to follow his orders or they couldn't have been payrolled.

GRANGER: All right. Now, what is your next point of disagreement with the statements in the letter.

THOL: "Fire control operations were planned and the fire was acted upon in accordance with methods that had been effective on thousands of fires in the region." I don't agree with that! Not in a case of this sort. It never was done before.

GRANGER: What was never done before?

THOL: Place the men in front of fire without any protection whatever.

GRANGER: Well, that point turns on your assertion that the men were placed in front of the fire and that no way of escape was planned for them?

THOL: That's right.

GRANGER: Dodge, of course, stated that his intention was to put the men on that portion of the fire line which he regarded as the safest and the most feasible was of attacking the fire, namely to work long the flank rather than trying to head it.

THOL: That was his mistake here, his lack of judgment. Take the man - we assume he has got to think. He didn't have the least idea what was going on below. The value of lives of men should be given first consideration. Like it always should be on big fires. It has always been done where men are placed in a touchy spot -- there is always some provision if they had looked ahead there to take care of the men in case something should go wrong. Even the places where lookouts are placed and the points where they watched the fire and in case the moment something should go wrong the men either by telephone or verbally are notified to get out. In this case the crew didn't have no protection whatsoever.

GRANGER: I guess that was covered in your first point, wasn't it? He shouldn't have taken them down there but should have taken them out over the hill?

THOL: Yes.

GRANGER: All right. What was the next point of disagreement?

THOL: That is all for the points. So far I have found no evidence of any major error. I asked Mr. Watts to mail me a copy of the 82-page report but I haven't received any. It was a public record and I am vitally concerned in such a public record.

GRANGER: On that point, reply was made that that report was not final and did not represent the conclusions of the Forest Service and that they will be recorded at the termination of this board and the factual statement as this board sees it and its conclusions and recommendations will be a matter of public record and copies will be available to those who have an interest.

THOL: But these statements were by Mr. Watts-I am sure they are based on this 80 page report. Otherwise, he would not have been able to make any kind of a report statement.

GRANGER: The board of review will reach its own conclusions as to whether those statements are right or wrong and record their

findings and that will be the authoritative position of the Forest Service which will, no doubt, be confirmed by the Chief of the Forest Service. That is the finding that will be terminative as far as the Forest Service is concerned.

THOL: Now there is another matter which I would like-

GRANGER: Let's see if I can enlarge upon that a little bit more. We might disagree with some of the things that are said in the Regional Forester's report-

THOL: That's right.

GRANGER: So the Forest Service in exercising it's final judgment should not be held to what is said in reports at a lower level.

THOL: I understand a crew was sent to the fire to work on the west part on that lower end of the fire. What happened to this crew?

GRANGER: Perhaps you better answer that, Pete, or Clayton, either one.

HANSON: A crew of 19 men went up what they call the Mann Gulch trail which starts at Meriwether Landing and worked on the Meriwether side of the fire to prevent it from spilling over into Meriwether Canyon.

THOL: Was there any work done?

HANSON: Yes.

THOL: Providing a crew did get there, why did the crew move out?

CROCKER: They were there until along in the night. On the Meriwether side-

THOL: Down the Meriwether side-But from the understanding that I have that the ranger, Jansson, dispatched a crew of 9 men and a ranger alternate, Hersey, to the fire to work on the west end of fire.

CROCKER: They were on the Meriwether side on top.

PRICE: No men on the west side.

THOL: But if Dodge had managed to get to the fire line and reach the river do you know what would have happened. Some of the boys would have drowned. Very likely. They had to go in the water to escape the heat. The bank is just like that-right straight off pretty much straight off. Some of it was a little (word unintelligible)down-that was in the deeper water. I took some pictures here-if you are interested-

HANSON: Mr. Thol is a very good photographer. It is his hobby.

The members of the board and Mr. Thol looked at a number of pictures and their comments were frequently simultaneous and mostly in connection with pointing to various things in the pictures, so no attempt has been made to transcribe the remarks during this period.

GRANGER: Now do you have any further comments or questions, Mr. Thol?

THOL: Yes. There were things weren't just right in their approach. Two days after this tragedy, there was quite an article in the Missoulian paper by Dodge stating his experience, stating about how he went through the fire and survived the fire-what he did. He also stated that when he stood up he heard somebody shouting. He found Sylvia 100 feet to the east of him and perhaps 150 feet below. He took care of him as good as he could at the time-helped him to a big rock. Then the official statement I have here with me-going through the same procedure-Sylvia wasn't discovered until the next morning when the rescue party dropped over down into Mann Gulch and found him at, I think 1:30 a.m. Now, where Dodge's mistake is, I would say it is 400 feet from where Sylvia's cross is-over double the distance west to from where their statements were made previously. I can't quite see the idea of that-I see the idea all right but I won't say it now. As far as Dodge surviving the fire-it was one chance in a hundred. He was lucky his clothes didn't catch fire or he would have joined Sylvia. Then another item- coming back to safety-because the men didn't stay with the foreman but were on their own responsibility. I would say this-when Dodge set the fire he didn't know where the men were. There might have been a few fellows around him but the whole thing was in such a state of confusion-Dodge really didn't know what he was doing when he set the fire. He didn't know where his crew were-where the men were. He knew they were ahead of him-some might have been behind him. When he set this fire he didn't know what he was doing. Indications in the ground show quite plainly that his own fire caught up with some of the boys up there above him. His own fire prevented those below him from going to the top. The poor boys were caught-they had no escape. By that time the fire was already ahead of them below the, and shut then completely off. And the boys that were ahead of him- perhaps they would have gotten over the top in better shape and perhaps would have saved their lives. Like two boys did. If Dodge feels the men were with him how does he account for this- that Reba is about 200 yards below him? Two hundred yards below where Dodge set the fire. It indicates quite plainly the men were not with him. Fire had to go when he set the fire-fire had to go on behind these men. There is no other way out of it unless you could put the fire out.

GRANGER: The men who did go up the hill and survive said that Dodge's fire did not interfere with their escape.

THOL: How do they know-they were already on the other side. They were far ahead of the rest of the boys-they could not if they had been much faster doubled the speed of some of the young fellows who had almost reached the top. They were ahead of them-they left Dodge before.

GRANGER: They were there when he set the fire. They were speaking only for themselves-the fire that Dodge set did not interfere with their getting over the ridge.

THOL: These two boys, they were on the other side of the fire and managed to get across, get over the top before they were prevented like the other boys who were right in front of them.

GRANGER: Of course, that shows that the means of safety for the crew and himself in setting the escape fire-

THOL: For himself-

GRANGER: He intended that the boys should get into that fire with him there as the best means of safety at that point.

THOL: But the boys were not with him any more-they were not with him. How does he explain Sylvia was about 400-Reba about 200 yards below him. There's Thompson and one more man below him- how does he account for that?

GRANGER: I suppose it's pretty hard to gauge which direction those men took or whether some of them that were found down the slope might have rolled or slid down there after the fire hit them.

THOL: Very likely. They, no doubt, ran around in fear and then dropped and were unconscious. They were unconscious when the fire reached them. That's right, I hope so at least. And the boys who were below his fire and they couldn't go up and they couldn't go down. They were just trapped. Dodge's own statement there mentions that a fire was at one pitch already ahead of them-no doubt it swept right through and these boys below the fire, there was no escape for them at all.

GRANGER: Well, if the boys that were close enough to his fire to get into it had gotten into his fire area they would have been all right according to the testimony.

THOL: They were not, yes sir, they were not right there with him and Dodge's own statement says that he went through into his own fire. When men get a flick of fire on his clothing-he would have been just like Sylvia-just like him.

GRANGER: Sylvia was not in the area that Dodge had set fire to.

THOL: He had to be pretty much right in his area. I say this, that if Dodge instead of going downhill and gone right ahead and the boys had been all together and said, "now let's burn up a patch" it would have been fine, if he had done that. It was too late, if he had done the thing before he took the boys down into the gulch he would of had plenty of time- it wouldn't even have been necessary to go to the top-he could have burnt the slope and it would have been allright. But in those split seconds there was no time for that at all and you couldn't hardly expect them, any man, to take such a chance. The men realized they had made a mistake and did not want to make another mistake. Any man would rather use his own judgment when it comes right to the very last moment-death or life, and he had no guarantee when the fire was that close to them- he had no guarantee that the boys would survive. If the boys hadn't burnt they would have suffocated-it wasn't necessary that they had to burn they could have suffocated.

GRANGER: Well, of course, all we know is that he got into the fire and got through and some of the men that survived said that they felt that if the others had followed his lead and had gotten into his escape fire they would have gotten through.

THOL: They were not with him any more-they were already gone.

GRANGER: They must've all gone past his escape fire because they were all on the other side of it when found.

THOL: They went as far as they could- they were quite a distance from Dodge and my boy was about 1500 feet from Dodge's area where Dodge

had it staked out- approximately about 1500 feet distance there. On a slope like that on an area like that it took place in minutes.

GRANGER: Of course, there's no way of determining precisely where all the boys were. It was Dodge's best judgment that they were all close enough to him to see what he was doing and hear what he said to them.

THOL: That's doubtful because when the boys dropped the tools, dropped the equipment -he didn't even know that they dropped the Pulaski and the shovels-it's so natural that they were so panicky-get out, get out, get out, boys! And he might have said something under the conditions of a fire of that size traveling at such a speed and such a roar it is hard to understand anybody-hard to hear. If he had done that instead when he decided to get out-gone to the hill even to the very same spot he set the fire- the boys now," we're all together, let's set fire to this here-protect ourselves".

GRANGER: All we can determine, Mr. Thol, the boys didn't start to scatter or to take off up the hill in the fear that they were in very great danger until the point was reached where the escape fire was set. Even after they dropped their tools- they apparently were not in any panic.

THOL: Well, I don't know-but whenever a soldier drops his rifle he is panicky.

GRANGER: They did that on the instruction of their leader.

THOL: Not the shovels- he didn't know himself-he was surprised that they had discarded the Pulaski and shovel.

GRANGER: Of course, that may have been merely confusion as to what he wanted to drop.

THOL: Could be, yes-when they did that-just like a soldier dropping his rifle. When they got to that point-well, I guess everybody has his own idea about what the state of mind was.

GRANGER: Of course, that's the thing a person doesn't know, except the state of mind of the men who got through and they both indicated that up until the point where the escape fire was set, we don't use the word panic, because they didn't really act as if they were panicky. They took off up the hill, but they didn't exhibit what would ordinarily be known as a state of panic.

THOL: Well that we don't know. I don't know, nobody else knows, any more than the statement tells us about. However, if their statements were tampered one way or another I don't know either. And under the circumstances they might not, in all the excitement, they might not really know themselves what is about-and maybe the statements are what they think-that's the way they feel.

GRANGER: Well, like you, we want to draw all the lessons we can from this so that there won't be any recurrence of the situation that can possibly be avoided and as you say we don't know what went through everybody's mind and can't entirely reconstruct what happened so that two men may reach different conclusions as to what should have been done, but I hope you feel that whatever

conclusions this board reaches that it has tried to prepare a factual and sound report and tried to be fair to all concerned.

THOL: May I come back to this part about experience. If he had so much experience in large scale fire operations-he would have to admit that under the conditions at that time it was totally useless trying to build a fire line where he intended to. Any man who ever worked on fires and under conditions we have here-he has only one answer to that, just useless-get out of there-you can't do nothing; if you did build a trench-how could you hold it, you're outflanked anyway. It's a waste of time.

GRANGER: It all comes back to a matter of judgment-that's all.

THOL: No, there's no judgment at all. He simply doesn't understand. The pictures indicate the ground conditions. Every time there's a hot fire like that what is a man going to do? To begin with he couldn't go near the fire for heat and smoke, and if he did drop below he'd have to build a wagon road to keep the stuff from rolling over. Then, even so, the wagon road would save nothing because fire will go right over the road; go right over the top of it.

GRANGER: Well, I am sure we understand your point of view about that. Now do you have other comments you wish to make or questions to ask?

THOL: There was another item made and I will refer to that, about safety - safety and discipline. The discipline of men worked well except at the last moment-that is a statement by the safety officer, that discipline has been thrashed out all the way through in the training. Like I already stated, training didn't enter this picture at all because it didn't have nothing to do with what happened there. And discipline-there is the question of how far to go on discipline. If I work under the direction of a foreman I have to follow his direction. And it plainly indicates and shows that he didn't know what he was doing and that he doesn't understand his work. Then, there is life and death involved. Should I still obey him?

GRANGER: The record shows, as I understand it, there have been no men burned up on fires when they got into tight situations when they followed the instructions of the leaders, as they ought to do.

THOL: In most cases on all large-scale fires, usually the foreman he always looked out for all, to take care of anything that happened. We always looked out for that before he put the men on the fire line. He had something to fall back on-maybe an old fire line, a piece of wood, a piece of metal, a piece of ground-the fire wouldn't do much harm. That may be on level ground where a fire wouldn't spread quite so fast, or maybe in thick timber where a fire wouldn't make such an enormous run. But that is all tempered by conditions-conditions on the ground, and this case was an extreme case. The whole situation seemed to hinge on this one thing. "lets go in there boys, the wind isn't blowing now. We'll go in there. But, watch out, the wind can change any moment." And if the wind did change like it did here happen, there was no escape for them. It would happen there was no avenue of escape other than get out in time to set a grass fire and protect themselves that way.

GRANGER: Now, I think we have covered that.

THOL: That's covered, yes.

GRANGER: Now is there anything further that you have to discuss?

THOL: No, that's all I got-may be some of the other parents have. I don't know but for the time being I'm through.

GRANGER: Anybody want to ask Mr.Thol any questions?.

HANSON: Mr.Thol had been asking us to make public statements.

THOL: The public, they want a clear-cut statement.

GRANGER: That's right-they're entitled to that. That's what they'll get from this board.

THOL: But now, I don't say now, that I'll agree to whatever this board decides on. I don't say that I agree with all those items.

GRANGER: WE understand that.

THOL: And there are things that I don't think of at this time that may occur to me yet and I'll want to bring up.

GRANGER: Well,if ther isn't anything further, we greatly appreciate your coming down and-

THOL: Glad to help and glad to have the chance to tell my story and like I already said I hope you don't have any grudge; I don't have any grudge but I do all I can do. I won't stop, so that things like this won't happen again.

GRANGER: I can assure you that we will give serious consideration to everything you have said.

THOL: I want to impress this on you: It is not an easy matter to lose your boy that way and I owe this to my boy, I will not rest until this curse,-that some people feel that if all the boys had stayed with the foremen would of all been alive-this is not so. The boys are innocent victims. I gave thirty years of my life for the Forest Service. I've been through a lot of thick and thin, and always managed to get out of it and the last time I saw my boy, Fourth of July, I asked a question of the boy-how he was getting along? "Oh fine." "Who are all your instructors there?" "Oh"-he mentioned the names. "Are they all thoroughly qualified and experienced in fires?" "Oh Dad, they know more than you do." I told Henry that's quite a statement. Now maybe some day you'll find out exactly why we told him-some day you'll find out-of course he can't tell me. The Diettert boy died on his birthday,August 5. Well,I'm glad I came down here and this is your report. I recieved it from you last week.

HANSON: Do you want to keep it as it is now?

THOL: Well,I hope you'll turn out another one. I'm going back on the bus this afternoon.

CROCKER: How is Mrs.Thol, Henry?

THOL: Oh well, I'll tell you, she's losing a lot of sleep and so is Mrs. Hellman. Mrs. Hellman is in poor shape. She can't get over it. Also she's been sick.

HANSON: Henry, what about in your case the adequacy of the \$200 compensation which was to take care of expenses after the body was received? Was the \$200 enough?

THOL: Yes it was. Oh by the way, about Mrs. William Hellman, she needs money and she is awfully anxious waiting for that which was still due her husband. The family is not in the very best standing and needs financial help.

HANSON: Well, didn't they have insurance, Henry?

THOL: Well, I don't know, she's still waiting-

HANSON: Did Hellman have an insurance that paid off immediately?

THOL: I don't know that, I don't know, I don't know. The other day I talked with her and she said, "I hope they come ahead with the money, because I need the money pretty badly."