

Smokejumpers Celebrate Seventy Years of Parachuting to Wildfires

It was a hot afternoon that July 12, 1940 when Rufus Robinson and Earl Cooley took off from the dirt airstrip in Moose Creek, Idaho and flew west into the headwaters of Martin Creek, Nez Perce National Forest. Moments later they made history by making America's first parachute jumps for the purpose of suppressing a wildfire. Seven decades later the National Smokejumper Association will celebrate by hosting a three-day reunion in Redding, California, June 11-13 at the Redding Convention Center.

From across the nation smokejumpers will gather to share the extraordinary camaraderie, friendships and jump stories that define smokejumping. All current and former jumpers, pilots, associates, wildland firefighters and contractors are invited. Make your plans to attend now. If you haven't received an application from the National Association, go online to smokejumpers.com and click on the National Smokejumper Reunion 2010 icon. An application can be downloaded and printed from the site.

Registration will be June 11 at the Redding Convention Center from 1200-1700. A barbecue on the North Patio from 1700-0100 will follow. Saturday the 12th there will be a Golf Scramble, Fun Run/Walk plus self guided tours of the Turtle Bay Museum, Botanical Gardens and the Paul Bunyon Forest Camp, all just walking distance from the center. Tours will also be conducted at the Redding Smokejumper Base and Wildland Firefighter Memorial. At 1800 a no host bar will proceed a sit-down catered dinner, award presentations, speakers and a slide show of smokejumper history. Sunday, June 13, the festivities will conclude with a memorial brunch from 0900-1200. Both the dinner and brunch will be at the Convention Center.

For those wishing for extra time to visit and tell jump stories, an additional function is planned for Thursday, June 10, 2010 from 1700-? at the Red Lion Inn outdoor swimming pool. Not part of the regular program, this will be a no-host Beer, Buddies and BS deal with finger food available. Be sure to make this one if you're already in town. Redding has lots of local points of interest such as Shasta Dam, Whiskeytown Lake, Shasta Caverns and river rafting. A fun time for the whole family.