



**Evergreen Aviation Museum**  
The Captain Michael King Smith Educational Institute

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## **Fighting Fires From the Sky – Smokejumper Exhibit Opens July 12**

***The Evergreen Aviation Museum opens a new exhibit to commemorate the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first use of smokejumpers for front-line firefighting.***

MCMINNVILLE, Ore.—Mon., July 12, 2004 - The Evergreen Aviation Museum commemorates the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of front line firefighters jumping from aircraft to protect United State’s forests by opening a new exhibit featuring smokejumpers. The new exhibit will pay tribute to smokejumping by detailing the service provided by these firefighters and their achievements. The exhibit will be on display long-term at the museum and visitors can expect to see it for the next year.

“Since 1940, smokejumpers have been a crucial asset to protecting America’s forests. Smokejumping has a direct correlation to the northwest and it is our privilege and honor to provide the story to Evergreen Aviation Museum patrons,” said Ben Kristy, Museum Curator.

The new exhibit has been made possible by a donation from the National Smokejumpers Association as well as personal photo and artifact donations from Smokejumpers nation-wide. The exhibit will feature the smokejumping suit worn by Francis Lufkin during the first experimental jump in the summer of 1939. The display also encompasses modern and early jump equipment, tools of the trade (including a cross cut saw, a Pulaski, chain saw and shovels), information regarding the development of smokejumping from early experiments through today and historical data including the all African American 555<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment known

as the “Triple Nickels” during World War II. The exhibit also includes a memorial to smokejumpers killed in action from 1930 to present.

Following several years of experimental parachute-jumping and aerial patrol, smokejumping was officially adopted in 1940 when the first operational fire jumps were executed. By 1944, the United States Forest Service had greatly reduced ground forces for fighting fires and increasingly employed smokejumpers to do the job. Of the more than 5,000 men and women who have served as smokejumpers since 1940, 30 have lost their lives in the line of duty, thirteen of which perished while fighting the 1949 Man Gulch Fire in the Helena National Forest in Montana. Over the past 64 years, approximately 300,000 jumps have been made.

The public is invited to join the exhibit opening ceremony July 12 at 10 a.m. and a public BBQ at 11a.m.. Cost of the BBQ is \$5.00 per person and includes a hotdog or hamburger, chips and a drink.

The Evergreen Aviation Museum is best known as the home of the world’s largest wooden airplane, the *Spruce Goose*, SR-71 *Blackbird* and Grumman F6F-3 *Hellcat*. In addition, there are more than 50 historic aircraft and exhibits on display, along with aviation artwork, traveling displays, the Spruce Goose Café and the museum store. The Evergreen Aviation Museum’s hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily except when it is closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year’s Day and Easter. An extensive museum store and friendly café add to the Museum experience. The Museum is located at 500 NE Captain Michael King Smith Way, across the highway from the McMinnville Airport and about three miles southeast of McMinnville, Ore., on Highway 18. Regular visitor admission is required. Call (503) 434-4180 for more information, and visit [www.sprucegoose.org](http://www.sprucegoose.org).

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