

## Incident Summary Page for the Smokejumper Line of Duty Death

<b>Name of Smokejumper LODD:</b> John A Rolf (MSO-57) Gary G Williams (MSO-59)	<b>Incident Name:</b> Moose Creek Airstrip Crash <b>Incident Date &amp; Time:</b> August 4, 1959
<b>Smokejumper Base:</b> Missoula	<b>Incident Location:</b> Moose Creek Ranger Station airstrip, Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho
<b>Personal Information</b>	
<p>John A Rolf 25, a 3 season smokejumper was born in Peekskill, New York and graduated from Hendrick Hudson High School in Montrose, New, York. He served in the US Navy from 1951 to 1954 and had attended Paul Smith College and Hartwick College in New York.</p> <p>Gary G Williams 23, a first year smokejumper, was born in West Valley, New York., and graduated from West Valley Central School. He had previously served in the US Army and was a forestry student at Montana State University after attending the New York Ranger School in New York.</p>	
<b>Brief description</b>	
<p>Smokejumpers Rolf, Williams and Roland Stoleson (MSO 56) along with Nez Perce Forest Supervisor Alva Blackerby boarded the Trimotor N8419 at Grangeville, Idaho. Piloted by Bob Culver, the mission was to deliver supplies to the Ranger Station and then to check on the location of a fire to the southeast near Pettibone Ridge.</p> <p>A tricky wind prevented the aircraft from landing on the first attempt, Culver then took the Ford up and around for a second try. The plane landed but was pushed forward by a tailwind to the end of the strip, where barrels of gasoline were stored. Stoleson recounts: <i>"after touchdown, Bob yelled back to us that we were going to hit. He tried to groundloop the Tri-motor. After hitting the trees, there was momentary silence. I thought we had made it. I was sitting on the floor, facing aft, immediately adjacent to the door with my back against a chainsaw box. John Rolf was seated to my right. Gary Williams was in the center of the fuselage toward the cockpit and Blackerby (Forest Supervisor) was in the co-pilot's (right side) seat. As I turned my head toward the cockpit, a blast of flame blew back through the fuselage at which time I dove out through the open door. I had to crawl through the burning limbs of a pine tree (evidently knocked down in the crash) to get away from the aircraft. Culver came running from the front of the aircraft. We were both burned, and he looked pretty bad."</i></p> <p>It is thought that Culver and Blackerby were able to escape through the Trimotor's side windows, Rolf and Williams exited through a crack in the fuselage, all were seriously burned.</p> <p>A doctor was flown in from Grangeville that afternoon and by that time Gary Williams had passed. John Rolf was flown to the hospital in Grangeville where he died that evening. Stoleson, Culver and Blackerby were all hospitalized in Grangeville, where Alva Blackerby died several days later.</p>	
<b>Links to more information on this incident:</b>	
<p><a href="https://lessons.wildfire.gov/incident/moose-creek-smokejumper-aircraft-crash-fatalities-1959">https://lessons.wildfire.gov/incident/moose-creek-smokejumper-aircraft-crash-fatalities-1959</a>  <a href="https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1959/08/04/jon-rolf-gary-williams-alva-blackerby/">https://wlfalwaysremember.net/1959/08/04/jon-rolf-gary-williams-alva-blackerby/</a>  <a href="https://smokejumpers.com/magazine/remembering-the-norton-creek-disaster-and-the-deaths-of-two-friends/">https://smokejumpers.com/magazine/remembering-the-norton-creek-disaster-and-the-deaths-of-two-friends/</a></p>	

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