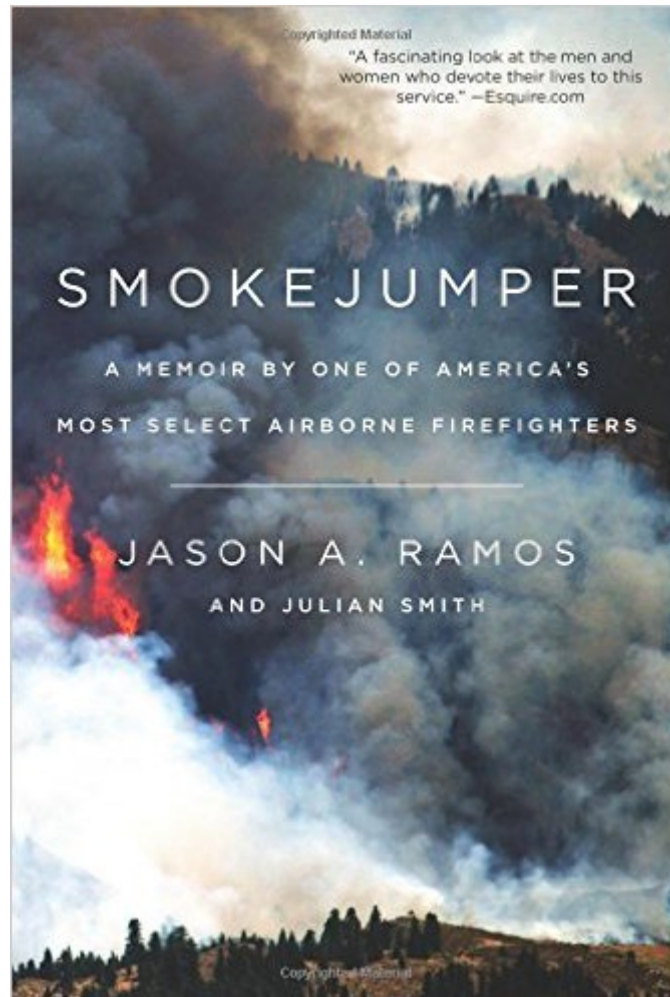


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# Smokejumper: A Memoir By One Of America's Most Select Airborne Firefighters



## Synopsis

A rare inside look at the thrilling world of smokejumpers, the airborne firefighters who parachute into the most remote and rugged areas of the United States, confronting the growing threat of nature's blazes. Forest and wildland fires are growing larger, more numerous, and deadlier every year — record drought conditions, decades of forestry mismanagement, and the increasing encroachment of residential housing into the wilderness have combined to create a powder keg that threatens millions of acres and thousands of lives every year. One select group of men and women are part of America's front-line defense: smokejumpers. The smokejumper program operates through both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Though they are tremendously skilled and only highly experienced and able wildland firefighters are accepted into the training program, being a smokejumper remains an art that can only be learned on the job. Forest fires often behave in unpredictable ways: spreading almost instantaneously, shooting downhill behind a stiff tailwind, or even flowing like a liquid. In this extraordinarily rare memoir by an active-duty jumper, Jason Ramos takes readers into his exhilarating and dangerous world, explores smokejumping's remarkable history, and explains why their services are more essential than ever before.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I absolutely loved this book. Smokejumper by Jason A. Ramos and Julian Smith is a whip fast, fun, and fascinating read. It is also, at times, deeply sad. As a firefighter myself, I've always been intrigued by smokejumpers — "the fittest and most elite of wildland firefighters. Not only do

they parachute out of planes to get to fires that no one else can reach, they hike across unbelievably rough terrain, often where no trails exist, carrying over a hundred pounds of gear and equipment on their backs. Fewer than 500 of them are active at any time in the US, which means they don't have much backup and if they get in trouble, there is no quick or easy exit. In other words, they're the badasses of wildland firefighting. Highly independent. Tough. Individualistic. There are three threads to Smokejumper: FF Ramos's own story (how a city boy from L.A. became a remote wilderness firefighter); a history of smokejumping (absolutely fascinating in and of itself); and a concise overview of three of our deadliest wildland fires including the Yarnell Hill Fire which killed 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots in 2013. Ramos assesses these fires and covers lessons learned while never blaming the victims and recognizing how it is in their very nature to push the limits and dive into the thick of things. Each thread of Smokejumper could be its own book and some of them are. Norman Maclean wrote about the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire in *Young Men and Fire* and his son John N. Maclean (who wrote the foreword to Smokejumper) recounts the Storm King Mountain tragedy that took the lives of fourteen smokejumpers and hot shots (including 4 women) in *Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire*. The history of smokejumping reads like its own adventure novel depicting Japanese bombs, forgotten battalions, and covert military operations. Each story is unbelievable. Ramos tells us about the Japanese balloon bombs launched to cross the Pacific and deploy over the US during WWII; The Triple Nickles, an all-black Parachute Infantry Battalion retrained as smokejumpers because so many American smokejumpers were fighting the war; and the fifty or so smokejumpers performing secret paramilitary missions for the CIA in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia during the Vietnam war. The only issue I had with this book was that I wanted more. More history. More training. More Ramos. More about the personalities of the jumpers themselves. (And the women? What the hell are they like?) Ramos shies away from describing any of his cohorts and yet I imagine there are some serious characters amongst this group. Also, like a typical firefighter, he remains resolutely silent on the emotional/personal toll of the job, such as witnessing the burned remains of fallen firefighters, losing people in such a tight-knit community, and living away from family and friends for months at a time. In a firestorm nothing is safe: sand turns to glass, metal runs like water, wood and human beings vanish into ash. It is a sad and painful reality that when wildland fires claim lives they often take entire crews. The strongest and the bravest. And yet these fires are getting larger and more deadly every year while the very people who fight them become ever more besieged by political obstacles. Fortunately, there will always be men and women willing to fight fires despite intense conditions, little pay, and overwhelming danger.

No one is better at this than smokejumpers and I applaud Jason Ramos for finally telling their story and giving the rest of us a tantalizing glimpse into their world.

This book is a fantastic read. It's fast-paced and full of adventure, but it also brings alive the history of smokejumping and tells of the pioneers who began the program in 1939. It weaves Jason's story together and current events together with the past, and gives you understanding and insight into wildland firefighting that you'll not find anywhere else. Plus, it's a darn good read for anyone who is interested in the West, climate change, wildfires and of course, smokejumping. Loved it!!!!

Having been a firefighter on the East Coast for almost 30 years, I have been exposed to almost every type of firefighting that exists with the exception of 2. I have never been exposed to the style of wildland firefighting that occurs here in the West and I have never been exposed to, or even met, a smokejumper. Smokejumpers are an elite, and to an average firefighter, crazy group of people who jump from perfectly good airplanes to land in some of the most rugged and inhospitable terrain that exists in the West for the express purpose of getting control of wildland fires in their early stages. They also fight regular wildland fires when there isn't any jumping to do. It is a program that has been around for dozens of years and has a surprisingly good safety record. The author takes the reader into the life of a smokejumper, and lets them experience, safely, what conditions are like on the fire line. He also delves into policy issues about how devastating wildfires develop and the need to let certain fire burn, rather than to put them out. An excellent read for both the novice and expert alike. I recommend it highly!

I had a hard time putting the book down. It is that good! The combination of personal stories and history of smokejumping, fires, etc. made it not only very interesting, but also very educational. I will never look at a fire the same way. Thank you for sharing this information with the rest of the world (who may or may not know anything about smokejumpers) and thank you to all of the smokejumpers for your service to this country.

this is a memoir by Jason Ramos one of Americas elite smokejumpers presently stationed in Winthrop Washington. You will learn plenty about the smokejumpers, their origin, training , mindset and firefighting methods. Ramos has been fighting fires both volunteer and professional since he was 17 years old. There are examinations of deadly wildfires of the past with lessons learned and changes that came about as a result along with the authors critiques and

recommendations. If you are interested in this unique profession along with the science of wild land fires, you will enjoy. Recommended .

This was an enjoyable and informative book. As a resident of Washington State, which is now on fire, it was particularly interesting. Combining the personal story with all the facts regarding wild fires kept the pace lively. Overall, an excellent book for this type of topic.

This is a true to the bone, thrilling and excellent stories in which one of my friends remembers allot of the things that occurred, while HE was in the Forest Service in many of these states. An excellent and exciting book from Jason A. Ramos. Awesome read

Having read and treasured Norman Maclean's "Young Men and Fire" years ago, I really enjoyed an update on the life of a smokejumper. They are so valuable and dedicated that it is hard to believe anyone would undertake their arduous training or work. Jaon Ramos is an inspiration.

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