

ACARC CLUB Field Trip 9/11/19

Destination: Sugarloaf Mountain Lookout Tower

Read about the tower's history and location;
<http://www.nhlf.org/lookouts/us/wa/sugarloaf-mountain-lookout/>

The objective of this field trip was to meet one of our Hams who just popped up one Tuesday evening in July and announced he'd like to be added to our Net Check-In regularly when he was on duty. When he said who he was (Ken Jones WA7KJ) and where he was, I had found a legitimate excuse to make a trip to one of my favorite places on earth, up by the tower at over 5000' where the view is endless on a clear day and the topography is rugged and fascinating. Need to meet this guy.

Not wanting to travel alone (bad idea when off-roading) I enlisted the company of another gent, Jim K7MQV, who seemed as enthusiastic as I was to meet Ken at his unique workplace that looks like this in nice weather:





If you look real close over to the left below the flag, you can spot several antenna coax's feeding into the lookout building. Pretty much a giveaway that Ken used more than a handheld to communicate. WOW. Can't wait to see his setup and hear the stories. (PS Flag was half-staff because it was the 9/11 Day of Remembrance.)

The big day started like this. About 1100 on 9/11 Jim and I met up at Big Lots and he got in my Jeep to begin the "adventure". Up highway 2 past Cashmere we drove as the Remembrance Ceremony was in full swing at the Memorial there (you MUST visit this solemn place of dedication), thence to Leavenworth and Chumstick highway and Eagle Creek road.

45 minutes later over some dirt roads that had been pelted with heavy rains the days before (great! NO DUST) but were completely passable, we arrived at the summit and were greeted

with the sight you see above. We walked up to the lookout and met Ken Jones in person after arranging the visit by radio and phone. Well, we got the grand tour and chatted about a million things in the next hour and a quarter. Here is Ken at his duty desk. What a view.



...and here is his diversion from boredom in the no-fire season. His Ham Shack extraordinaire. He has several personal radios and a communication radio provided by the Forest Service for comms with headquarters.

His radios are trusty oldies but goodies energized by a battery that is charged with solar panels. They certainly do the trick because there is no electricity at the Lookout, everything is

powered by a large propane tank a bit down the hill near the turnaround. Lights, heat, refrigeration, etc.

In his spare time this winter, Ken is going to dive into the world of CW, just because. He plans to study so he can get good at it and try it out next year when he is back on duty.



In talking to him for a while, we exchanged our life's work and how we all somehow ended up at 5280' on a mountaintop. He started his working life in the Air Force as a C-130 pilot for about 8 years and then went into the Reserves and continued flying while he started a new profession in Forestry that led him to many more places and very challenging opportunities at many levels of management. He is now retired, lives with his wife in

Washougal down near Vancouver and is enjoying life doing crazy things like this between July and September.



Jim and Ken talking shop and exchanging info to help him with a few problems.



Towards the end of our visit, we gathered for a group picture (thanks to Jim's tripod - selfies never would have cut it.)

Just before leaving I was proud to present Ken with a small souvenir, one of our 50-year Challenge Coins. He was very surprised and very appreciative for the coin and for our visit.





PS: A humorous moment came when during the conversation I had a chance to take a kind of funny picture of him while we talked. There was this controlled burn going on down by Lake Wenatchee that lent itself to the picture below.

Headline: ***Fire Lookout sits chatting as the forest burns.*** I know that is mean, but funny. We all had a good laugh.



Final Final interesting fact, during lightning storms when the electricity illuminates the nearby trees with St. Elmo's fire like Christmas lights, he parks himself on a 4 legged chair (like a dunce chair) that has glass electrical insulators on the feet. He says it's a real butt penance to sit on that wooden stool for an hour and a half, but it could save one's life if a stray hit decided to light up the place.

Hope you gained an appreciation of what Lookout Rangers do and got to know Ken a little better. It can get pretty boring up there between the emergencies, just like flying C-130's I guess.

Rich Cronin K7RBC 9/16/19