



Jerrold “Jerry” “Hog” Daniels (1941-1982)

The youngest smokejumper in Missoula’s history and CIA operative. Jerry lived and worked directly with the Hmong General Vang Pao to rescue Hmong refugees, many of which were brought to the Missoula and Bitterroot area. Mystery surrounds his death, including whether he is really dead.

- **1941-Birth.** June 11, 1941 in Palo Alto CA. Parents: Bob and Louise Daniels. Three brothers: Ronald, Jack, and Kent. Moved to Helmville MT in 1951. Graduated from Missoula County High School in 1959. Avid hunter and fisherman.
- **1958-1960.** ‘Fudged’ application and became one of the youngest smokejumpers in Missoula’s history at barely 17 years old. Attended fires in Montana, New Mexico, and California.
- **1960-1963.** While a smokejumper, the CIA asked him to be a ‘cargo kicker’ based out of Thailand. Cargo kickers were often smokejumpers as they had such familiarity with parachutes and jumping and surviving in rough terrain. Planes were loaded with cargo, flown into areas accessible only by plane, and cargo was then ‘kicked’ out the door, and parachuted to drop off points on ground.
- **1963-1969.** Student at University of Montana, required for his job in Laos. Divided time between classes and job duties as a CIA Junior Case Officer in Laos for the Hmong people. Graduated in 1969. Promoted to a full Case Officer in Laos upon graduation.
- **1970-1975.** Personal Case Officer for General Vang Pao. Worked closely with the General on front-line military operations: battle plans, support of troops, equipment needs, finance needs, etc. The area had intense fighting. The Long Cheng airstrip was the stronghold for General Vang Pao and one of the busiest airport in the world at that time, moving troops and equipment. The only access to this area was via this airstrip. The airstrip was a mile long and handled C130, C47, and C46 planes. This airstrip was a top secret joint operation between Laos and the United States. CIA worked directly with the Hmong without government interference.
- **1973.** Cease fire called but existed on paper only. The Pathet Lao (Communist) and the Royalists (pro-American) troops continued to fight heavily through 1975.
- **1973–1975.** With U.S. funding, one of Jerry’s tasks was to aid in the post war reconstruction projects and job development for the thousands of Hmong soldiers living in the Long Cheng area.
- **5/01-14/1975.** The United States rapidly began airlifting people and troops out of Vietnam prior to the fall of Saigon to Communist forces. Jerry was left to orchestrate secret air evacuations of Hmong from Laos to Thailand. He single-handedly was responsible for saving 2500 Hmong leaders and their families. The Hmong did not have a written language so screening was done visually and verbally to determine a person’s loyalty to the United States. Jerry’s position in the Hmong community gave him great insight in this area. Many refugees were sent to General Vang Pao’s farm in the Bitterroot during this time period.
- **1975-1982.** Jerry returned to Thailand and worked for the State Dept. as an Ethnic Affairs Officer. The Hmong did not have a written language so screening for possible refugee status was done visually and verbally to determine a person’s loyalty to the United States. Jerry’s position in the Hmong community gave him great insight in this area. Many Hmong refugees were sent to the Missoula area to be near General Vang Pao’s farm in the Bitterroot during this time period.
- **4/29/1982-Death.** Mysterious death in Bangkok. Official report: Jerry Daniels died of asphyxiation from propane water heater in his apartment. A disfigured body was found in his apartment, said to be dead a few days. Without visual or DNA testing, the body was declared by the U. S. Embassy to be that of Jerry Daniels. The casket was sealed with explicit instructions and security to guarantee it not be opened. The family was told Jerry was in the casket but no verifiable proof has ever been submitted. Upon the casket



arriving in Missoula, the Hmong were allowed to honor him with a full formal three day traditional Hmong funeral celebration. Never has any non-Hmong been paid such tribute.

- To this day, Hmong around the world claim to have seen Jerry in Laos, the United States, and Europe since the time of his 'proclaimed' death. Many of the Hmong believe Jerry was placed into protection and continues his work to this day.

Information and photos provided by Kent (Dan) Daniels - brother of Jerry, Kim Briggeman – Missoulian reporter, Gayle Morrison – author of Sky is Falling, Hmong soldiers who worked directly with Jerry, various newspaper clippings, and interviews with friends, acquaintances, and friends. Note: Gayle Morrison continues work on a complete biography of Jerry Daniels to be published soon.