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## Smokejumper Obituary: Wessbecher, Howard Otto (Missoula 1948)

National Smokejumper Association

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# Smokejumper Obituary

## Wessbecher, Howard Otto (Missoula 1948)

Howard, 91, died April 8, 2017, in Corvallis, Oregon. He was born October 7, 1925, in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. Howard was called to duty in 1944 and served in the military police in the war in the Pacific. After his service he used his GI Bill to attend Montana State University to obtain his degree in Forestry.

Upon his graduation he went to work for the US Weather Bureau Arctic Operations. This led him to work at both the North and South Poles. He was among the first group of scientists who "wintered over" at the South Pole. Howard's job was to coordinate with the military to set up the research projects for International Geophysical Year at the soon-to-be opened South Pole Base before the first landing there on October 31, 1956.

He worked with the military to ensure that everything that was needed for aurora, geomagnetism, seismology, ionospheric, meteorology, geomorphology and glaciological research was packaged and readied for air drop when South Pole Base opened. Howard also painted the first South Pole "pole" and also was honored with Wessbecher Glacier, named after him to mark his scientific assistance in the establishment of the South Pole station.

Returning to the Pacific Northwest, he got a job in forestry as a silviculturist and became an expert in reforestation for the National Forest Service.

Retiring from the Forest Service, Howard eventually went to work for Oregon State University in the mail room. He jumped at Missoula during the 1948 season.

*(end of excerpt)*