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Smokejumper Obituary: Ritzman Jr., Michael Erwin (McCall 1944)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Ritzman Jr., Michael Erwin (McCall 1944)

Michael, 96, died May 19, 2014, in Coatsville, Pennsylvania. He was born in Changsha, China, on September 23, 1918, where his father was a missionary. They returned to the U.S. (Gratz, Pennsylvania) in May 1922 when Michael was age three. Michael graduated from HS in nearby Reading, PA, where his father (PhD) was a professor at Albright College. He graduated from Maryville College, Maryville, Tennessee and later did post grad work in Personnel Administration at Yale, Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania.

In October 1940, Michael was working for the Boy Scouts of America in Washington, PA, near Pittsburgh, when he filled out his WWII Draft Card. He entered the Civilian Public Service in June 1942, listing his employment as "Real Estate Dealer."

Mike jumped at McCall during the 1944 season and had nine practice jumps. He broke his ankle on his last practice jump ending his smokejumping career.

Michael's working career was for the YMCA, primarily in New York and Pennsylvania, retiring in January 1973 as the Executive Director of the YMCA in Chester, PA. The newspaper article written upon his retirement noted that he had a 25 year career with the YMCA and was a "Mild mannered man." He then worked part time as a Tax Consultant for the Tax Corporation of New York. By 2000 he and his wife, Genevieve, had moved to a large retirement living community near Coatsville, PA.

Both Michael and Genevieve were lifelong active Pacifists and anti-war activists, supporting organizations institutions with similar beliefs. He and Genevieve loved to dance and travelled extensively to square dance exhibitions.

(end of excerpt)