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Smokejumper Obituary: Rehfeldt, Richard "Dick" (Missoula 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Rehfeldt, Richard "Dick" (Missoula 1943)

Dick was born November 5, 1921, in Chicago, Illinois. He was a forestry student in 1940 at Iowa State University, graduating at a later date. Dick was a Conscious Objector of the Methodist faith, seeking exemption based on his religious beliefs for entering the military in WWII. He entered the Big Flats Civilian Public Service (CPS) Camp, Camp Number 046-01 on November 23, 1942. When he entered, he listed his occupation as forester. Big Flats was a USDA Soil Conservation Service sponsored camp with the primary mission being the prevention of soil erosion.

When the Forest Service solicited CPS volunteers for smokejumper training, Dick volunteered, and he was selected for training in 1943. He continued as a smokejumper through 1945 making at least five fire jumps.

Beginning in late 1945, veterans were being discharged from military duty and they were the primary work force taking the place of Conscientious Objectors in the 1946 smokejumper program. After smokejumping ended in 1945, Dick transferred to CPS Camp 108-01 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It was a national park service camp supporting the work of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

In the summer of 1948, while a forestry student at Iowa State University, Dick was a lookout and fire guard on the Lewis & Clark NF in Montana. In the 1950's he was a fire control officer on the Apache Indian Reservation in Whiteriver, Arizona. By 1960, Dick transferred to the Bureau of Land Management in the Salem and southwest Oregon area. Upon retirement, his last residence was Central Point, Oregon except as a winter visitor to the Phoenix, Arizona area.

Dick died January 23, 1991 in Central Point, Oregon.

(end of excerpt)