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Smokejumper Obituary: Cramer, Albert Wiltse (Missoula 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

Smokejumper Obituary

Cramer, Albert Wiltse (Missoula 1943)

Al, 69, died May 12, 1992, in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. He was born October 14, 1922, in Missoula, Montana. Al graduated from Great Falls (MT) High School in 1941 and was in the 1943 rookie smokejumper class. He jumped at Missoula 1943-45, McCall in'46, back to Missoula'47-50 and'52-60. Al then went to the BLM jumper program in Fairbanks 1966-67.

In a recorded oral interview, Al recounts his static line hook coming off the cable on his 7th rookied jump and he was forced to use his reserve. He was also one of the few jumpers to handle a one-jumper fire. In 1947 he made the first fire jump in New Mexico as the Forest Service was experimenting with the possibility of using jumpers in a part of the country with high winds and high altitude landing spots.

In 1949 Al spotted four jumpers in an exhibition jump into the National Mall in Washington, DC. By established policy at the time, Al had to stop jumping at age 40. When he transferred to the BLM in Fairbanks, he wrote a BLM policy changing that rule. The Forest Service followed.

(end of excerpt)