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Smokejumper Obituary: Laughlin, William S. (Cave Junction 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Laughlin, William S. (Cave Junction 1943)

Bill died April 6, 2001. He was raised in Oregon where his father taught at Willamette University. After high school he worked as a patrolman for two Oregon State Parks. In 1938 he went with a Smithsonian field group to Alaska to study pre-historic migration. He and another person located a site where, in 1974, they discovered tools seven to nine thousand years old.

Bill graduated from Willamette University and continued graduate studies at Bryn Mawr College.

After entering Civilian Public Service, he arrived at Camp 103 at Seeley Lake, MT. in the spring of 1943. There, in addition to regular smokejumper skills, he was trained by Frank Derry in parachute rigging and repair as well as spotter training. Bill then went to the Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, Oregon, where he jumped for two seasons finishing with 34 total jumps.

Bill returned to do graduate work at Harvard spending much time in the Aleutians doing anthropometric measurements for his Ph.D. thesis. After graduation from Harvard he taught at the University of Oregon (1949-55), Univ. of Wisconsin (1955-69) and the Univ. of Connecticut (1969-90).

(end of excerpt)