

June 2020

Smokejumper Obituary: Wessell, Richard L. "Dick" (Cave Junction 1956)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Wessell, Richard L. "Dick" (Cave Junction 1956)

Dick, 82, died May 22, 2020, in Silverton, Oregon. After graduating high school in Reedsport, Oregon in 1956, he and a buddy went looking for a town with a semi-professional baseball team, as they hoped to play pro ball one day. They stumbled on Cave Junction and the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. His buddy wanted no part of jumping, but Dick "jumped" at the chance. Dick jumped from 1956-61, then went to the Gold Beach Ranger Station 1962-66.

He returned to Cave Junction and resumed jumping from 1966-72, including time as the Base Foreman. Dick also was a high school referee, EMT and volunteer ambulance driver. He transferred to Brookings in 1973 as the Fire Management Officer on the Chetco Ranger District. In 1979 he transferred to the Umpqua NF Supervisor's Office in Roseburg as the Assistant Fire Staff Officer and retired from the Forest Service in 1988.

During his career he also served on various forest and regional fire and incident command overhead teams as an air attack officer. After his forest service retirement, he spent six years with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office as a patrol deputy. Dick was never prouder of anything than being a smokejumper. In his later years he would not be caught in a shirt without the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base emblem.

(end of excerpt)