

June 2020

## Smokejumper Obituary: Muhm, Robert E. (Missoula 1949)

National Smokejumper Association

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### Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Muhm, Robert E. (Missoula 1949)" (2020). *Smokejumper Obituaries*. 488.

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# Smokejumper Obituary

## Muhm, Robert E. (Missoula 1949)

Bob died July 13, 2013. He was born on April 8, 1924 in Kanawha, Iowa and raised in a farming family

After graduating from high school, he attended a local junior college before enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1943. Bob served as a navigator with the rank of Technical Sergeant (Aviation) and was discharged in 1946.

With the help of the G.I. Bill he enrolled at Iowa State College and graduated with a degree in Forestry in 1950. During that time, he jumped at Missoula during the 1949 season. From his daughter Marjorie: "His stint as a smokejumper was relatively brief, however the experience left an indelible impression on him."

He began his career in Manufacturing at Wood Conversion Company making building materials from wood byproducts. In 1961, he transferred to a plant in New Jersey and in 1967 accepted a position as plant manager at Appleton Manufacturing Company's plant in Michigan City, Indiana. In 1971 Bob left the wood products industry when he became plant manager at UOP Johnson in West Deptford, New Jersey, making industrial filters and well screens. He retired in 1986.

From Bob's Daughter: "Back in 1980 when Bob was on a flight to Minneapolis-St. Paul he fell into a conversation with a fellow traveler who casually mentioned being from Missoula. Bob mentioned spending the summer of 1949 there working for the U.S. Forest service as a smokejumper. The traveler mentioned a September article that appeared in The Daily Missoulian about Norman Maclean's plan to write about the Mann Gulch fire. Bob obtained a copy of the article and followed up with a letter to Professor Maclean, describing the afternoon of August 4 when his crew was recalled from Grangeville. When he arrived in Missoula, he checked the posted jump list and found he was listed number five under the checked-off Mann Gulch crew. In his letter to Maclean he admitted that coming within five people of being with those men at that fire made him think many times of what might have been."

*(end of excerpt)*