

June 2020

Smokejumper Obituary: Cole, Kermit C. (Missoula 1949)

National Smokejumper Association

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Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Cole, Kermit C. (Missoula 1949)" (2020).
Smokejumper Obituaries. 491.
https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_bios/491

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Smokejumper Obituary

Cole, Kermit C. (Missoula 1949)

K.C., 87, died August 25, 2013, in Edmonds, Washington. K.C. came from humble beginnings to achieve greatly. Home was near Darby in the Bitterroot Valley. As a young man he stayed close to home but did join the Army Air Corps in 1944 for a two-year stint. Training consisted of going to gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona. Not being assigned to a permanent unit right away, he volunteered for training in aerial photography. This lengthy training prevented him from being shipped overseas.

In his youth, K.C. worked fires, drove truck and was part of a brush crew. This led him to sign up as a Forestry major in college. His roommate, Jack Dunne (MSO-46), talked him into seasonal smokejumping by persuading him with the argument, "you don't have to walk to the fire." The three years of jumping came to an end in 1950 and was followed by a career in academia.

K.C. graduated from Western Montana College with a degree in education and went on to earn his master's degree from the University of Montana. He started as a teacher in rural Idaho and became Elementary School supervisor for the State of Montana in 1967. In 1972 he quit and went to work at an institute sponsored by C.S. Mott. This organization endeavored to change the educational system with innovative approaches.

After obtaining his Ph.D. from Wayne State, he continued in education for the rest of his career. He taught in Oregon and supervised the conversion of general degrees to teaching degrees until 1986. K.C. retired in 1986 from Central Elementary in Flushing, Michigan.

K.C. credited smokejumping with giving him the courage to make changes in his life, in education, and in his community where he continues to be involved.

(end of excerpt)