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Smokejumper Obituary: Tuttle, Richard E. (North Cascades 1940)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Tuttle, Richard E. (North Cascades 1940)

Dick, 46, died March 25, 1964, in Hoquiam, Washington. He was born in Fort Thomas, AZ. He was one of the 16 members of the F.S. Smokejumping Experimental group in 1939 and participated as an employee of the Eagle Parachute Corporation.

For several previous summers he, along with Al Honey, were smoke chasers on the Chelan NF. The two of them made their "first-timer" jumps on October 16 from about 3,000 feet in 30-foot Eagle Parachutes. Dick made eleven jumps during the experiment. The local media named Dick and Al the "The Original Jumping Smoke Chasers." After the experimental jumps ended, Dick went to Pennsylvania to work for the Eagle Parachute Corporation becoming an "expert jumper," a licensed rigger, licensed to train other jumpers, and making exhibition jumps.

Dick returned to Winthrop in 1940 and trained to become one of the five smokejumpers on the 1940 Winthrop crew. On June 27, Dick was seriously injured when he fell from a tree adjacent to the Winthrop Ranger Station, while installing an antenna in the top of a tree. The injuries from the fall prevented him from being able to make any more parachute jumps.

Although not able to make parachute jumps, he worked as a parachute rigger for the F.S. the summer of 1940, and later as a parachute rigger instructor for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. In 1958 Dick was living in Spokane, Washington, working as a construction worker.

In 1964 he committed suicide after being in the county jail for one day. Dick's ashes are buried in the Sullivan Cemetery, Winthrop, Washington, with the grave marker inscribed "Pioneer Smoke Jumper."

(end of excerpt)