

November 2018

Smokejumper Obituary: Wilson, Richard M. (Missoula 1948)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Wilson, Richard M. (Missoula 1948)

Dick, 91, died October 10, 2018, in Sitka, Alaska. He was born July 22, 1927, in Chicago, Illinois. He joined the Marine Corps in 1945 at age 17 and was discharged a year later after WWII ended. He later graduated from Colorado State with a degree in Forestry.

Dick was one of the jumpers who went on a fire call early on August 5, 1949. His was a dry run and he returned just in time to see the Doug take off with the Mann Gulch jumpers. Dick worked on the remains recovery crew later that week.

Dick worked his way up through the Forest Service and ended his career as Chatham Area Supervisor of the Tongass N.F. He retired in Sitka in 1982. He took up a new cause advocating for mental health services and mental health rights, particularly for children. Dick was a member of SAMI (Sitka Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Board on Mental Health.

In his words: "Despite being a Marine and a Smokejumper, I was a gentle man who valued peace."

(end of excerpt)