

November 2014

Smokejumper Obituary: Stratton, Homer Wagner (Missoula 1947)

National Smokejumper Association

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Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Stratton, Homer Wagner (Missoula 1947)" (2014). *Smokejumper Obituaries*. 750.

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Smokejumper Obituary

Stratton, Homer Wagner (Missoula 1947)

Skip, 92, died October 30, 2014. He was born at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula on March 17, 1922, and attended grade school at Lowell Elementary and graduated from Missoula County High School in 1940.

After he graduated from high school, he completed the Aviation Cadet program at the Johnson Flying Service after the start of WWII. He then completed military pilot training at Kelly Field in Texas. After the war Skip returned to the University of Montana where he received his degree in Forestry in 1949 followed by his master's degree in 1950. During this time, he was a jumper at Missoula from 1947 through the 1950 season.

Skip was one of the four jumpers who participated in the demonstration jump on the Ellipse in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. in 1949. Ironically, he headed up a crew to recover the victims of the Mann Gulch Fire, one of whom he had made the D.C. jump weeks earlier.

Skip made his last fire jump in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1950 before accepting an appointment as a forester on the Coeur D'Alene N.F. He spent 26 years with the Forest Service before retiring as Assistant Chief of Fire Control in R-1 in 1973. Skip was carded as an Incident Commander and was in charge of some of the largest fires in the region as well as in California.

(end of excerpt)