

July 2012

## Smokejumper Obituary: Ratzlaff, Leon H. (Missoula 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

Follow this and additional works at: [https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper\\_bios](https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_bios)



Part of the [Forest Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Obituary: Ratzlaff, Leon H. (Missoula 1943)" (2012).  
*Smokejumper Obituaries*. 814.  
[https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper\\_bios/814](https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_bios/814)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Smokejumper Digital Archive at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Smokejumper Obituaries by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jotto@ewu.edu](mailto:jotto@ewu.edu).

# Smokejumper Obituary

## **Ratzlaff, Leon H. (Missoula 1943)**

Lee, 78, died May 20, 1998, in Henderson, Nebraska. He was born in Henderson October 31, 1919, with seven siblings on the family farm. Lee was a member of the Mennonite Church and graduated from Henderson H.S. before attending York College in Nebraska for a year. He then taught 15 months before he was drafted for service in World War II.

Lee was at one camp before going to the CPS-103 smokejumper unit in Montana and was among the first CPS jumpers trained in 1943. He was one of the few CPS jumpers who jumped all three years of the program.

Lee was worried about not qualifying for jumping due to his weight, which was close to the 135-pound minimum. Not taking any chances, he bought all the available rationed bananas - approximately five pounds of them - at a local grocery store and ate them before his final physical.

After the war Lee returned to farming until 1954 when he could no longer afford to live from the income of the farm. Lee joined York Manufacturing as a truck driver delivering supplies all over the U.S. and Canada. In 1972 he became partially paralyzed from a fall from his truck.

From Lee's wife, "By word and example, he encouraged his children to think and to make decisions for themselves. Thank God this was accomplished before he lost the ability effectively communicate. Lee saw himself as part of God's Kingdom and his contribution being that of a simple man with high ideals."

*(end of excerpt)*