

February 2014

Smokejumper Obituary: Kersh, Robert Charles (Pioneer Redding Loft Foreman 1957)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Kersh, Robert Charles (Pioneer Redding Loft Foreman 1957)

Bob died February 25, 2014, 91-years old in the home he built himself in Redding California. A fifth generation Californian with roots in the Gold Country, he was in the CCC in the late 1930s in the Mt. Lassen-Redding area; then in WWII served in the USMC at the Battles of Midway and Saipan, and trained recruits at Camp Lejeune in advanced infantry training for the impending invasion of Japan (called off with surrender).

In the early 1950s working the paracargo depot and smokejumper spike base in downtown Redding, Bob was instrumental in the formation of the Redding Smokejumpers in 1957; then the design and building of the Redding Airport Smokejumper Base in the early 1960's - much of it himself.

Meticulous with attention to detail, Bob trained generations of Redding Smokejumpers in all aspects from the training units, jumping, woodsmanship including timber falling, and the parachute loft. He was immensely proud of his smokejumpers, imbuing "Poags" (Redding Rookies) and experienced jumpers with his unique "character building" as well as can-do attitude of doing the best job possible, even with the limited resources typical of the smokejumper mission.

The Detailer and "Retread" Programs of the 1960s and 1970s spread Bob's positive influence throughout the USFS California Region 5 lasting to this day.

(end of excerpt)