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Smokejumper Obituary: Helburn, Nicholas (Missoula 1944)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Helburn, Nicholas (Missoula 1944)

Nick, 92, died June 11, 2011, in Boulder, Colorado. He was drafted into Civilian Public Service in 1944 from Bozeman, Montana, and jumped at Missoula during the 1944-45 seasons. Nick had ten training and two fire jumps in '44 and two training and four fire jumps in 1945.

He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Chicago and received his Master's in Agricultural Economics at Montana State University. Nick had spent a year at Harvard University, but left to spend a year working in the New Hampshire mountains. Nick was a conscientious objector during World War II; his alternative service was jumping from Missoula in the 1944-45 seasons, following a stint of building bridges in Tennessee.

Nick began his professional career at Montana State, helping to establish the Department of Earth Sciences. Nick spent a year in Turkey in 1951 on a Ford Foundation grant; the research from this time resulted in a book about dry land agriculture and village culture in Anatolia.

Nick moved to Boulder in 1965 to direct the High School Geography Project, one of the "New Social Studies" curriculum projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation to develop a new approach for teaching geography in high schools. He became the first director of the Education Resources Information Center for Social Studies. He joined the Geography Department at the University of Colorado in 1971 and served as chairman for three years. He was also elected president of the Association of American Geographers.

(end of excerpt)