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## Smokejumper Obituary: Diller, Kenneth A. (Cave Junction 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

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## Smokejumper Obituary

### Diller, Kenneth A. (Cave Junction 1943)

Ken died in August 16, 1998. He was born January 17, 1919, on a farm near Bluffton, Ohio. His parent were killed in an auto accident when he was in the 8th grade. Ken graduated from high school in 1937 and participated in football and music. With his Mennonite background, Ken joined the Civilian Public Service (CPS) in 1942 as was assigned to a camp in Virginia.

"During the winter, I answered an ad that asked for volunteers to be trained for smokejumping. I May, I was at Seely Lake, MT and, after training, went to Cave Junction, Oregon, where ten of us started the first smokejumper base in Oregon.

Ken jumped for two seasons at Cave Junction. He and Calvin Hilty possibly made the first fire jump in California (July 30, 1944). He then jumped his third season at Winthrop. "I loved the scenery in Washington, the trees were less tall than the 225 footers in Oregon, and there seemed to be more alpine meadows."

"On July 27, (1945) we jumped three loads on the Bunker Hill Fire—there was a strong wind blowing. We managed to get a line around the fire that night. About sun-up five DC-3s flew over. One started dropping equipment about a mile from us before we were able to direct his attention to an area near the fire. By this time the wind had died down providing idea conditions for the 100 black Airborne (paratroopers) from Camp Pendleton."

Ken was one of the few CPS-103 jumpers to jump all three seasons.

After the war he returned to Ohio to resume his career as a farmer/rancher. "Smokejumping had to be a high point in a farmer's life."

After retiring, he continued to work at the nearby Mennonite Memorial Nursing Home.

*(end of excerpt)*