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National Smokeyumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Stanley, Philip B. (Missoula 1943)

Phil, 89, died November 7, 2008, in Polson, Montana. He was born April 19, 1919 in Kiafeng, Honan Province, China to missionary parents. They returned to the U.S. in 1927 when the living situation became dangerous due to battles between local war lords.

Phil enrolled in a private school in New York, graduated, and entered Oberlin College but dropped out his second year. He was drafted into the Civilian Public Service in 1942.

He fought fire and maintained trails in forests on the west coast. It was during this time he heard that the fledgling smokejumper program was having trouble getting and keeping able-bodied firefighters due to the demands of WWII.

In October 1942 Phil wrote a letter to Axel Lindh, the head of Fire Control in Region One: "I occurred to me some three months ago that you might need men for your parachute firefighting corps, either for experimental purposes or to do the actual firefighting."

As a result of his letter writing campaign to Region 1 and Washington, D.C., the CPS-103 smokejumper unit was started in May 1943. Some 225 conscientious objectors kept the smokejumper program going from 1943-45.

With a large number of young men raised on farms in the mid-west, the group was known for their ability to work long and hard. Phil opened a photography store in Missoula after the war and eventually retired to Polson in 1990.

(end of excerpt)