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## Smokejumper Obituary: Ainsworth, John L. (Missoula 1943)

National Smokejumper Association

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# Smokejumper Obituary

## Ainsworth, John L. (Missoula 1943)

John died August 6, 2008, in Maple Valley, Washington, at age 90. He was born in May 1918 in Spokane, WA. At age nine the family moved to Detroit. John went to high school in Detroit but attributes much of his physical conditioning to a YMCA camp where he worked in the summer. "The camp experience contributed greatly to my physical conditioning, so I was able to engage in track and cross country in high school and some running in college. Without this activity, I do not think I would have qualified for smokejumping."

John was interested in electrical engineering from a young age and, after starting college in Michigan, he went to the University of Southern California. After his graduation in 1940, he went to work for Lockheed Aircraft before taking a position at Westinghouse in Pittsburg, PA. Due to religious reasons, he turned down a draft deferment as a critical worker and was sent to a Civilian Public Service Camp.

Phil Stanley started the action to convince the powers that the CPS men would be an excellent resource for the smokejumper program that was threaten by the lack of manpower. John was among the first selected to the initial 1943 program and jumped all three years of the program.

Following his discharge, he returned to Southern California and began work with the Edison Company. He moved to Polson, MT in 1947 where he continued his work and then followed a move to Hungry Horse where he was active in the Methodist Church. John worked on the construction of the Hungry Horse Dam and retired from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1981. John was ahead of his time being an early advocate of organic gardening, composting and solar power. He built and drove an electric car in the 1970s.

*(end of excerpt)*