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## Smokejumper Obituary: Brauer, Fred O. (Missoula 1941)

National Smokejumper Association

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# Smokejumper Obituary

## Brauer, Fred O. (Missoula 1941)

Fred died June 25, 2007. He was born Aug. 23, 1917, in Butte and attended Bonner School and then Missoula County High School, graduating in 1937. Fred then went on to the University of Montana, where he played football for the Grizzlies from 1937 to 1940. He joined the smokejumpers in 1941 at age 23 and, during a slow season, had a single fire jump. Fred was a squadleader during the 1942 season at Seeley Lake.

Fred then joined the Army Air Corp as a pilot and flew C-46s and C-47s in the European Theater where he was awarded the distinguished flying cross.

When the Smokejumper Center in Missoula was dedicated in 1954, he was selected to welcome President Eisenhower and present him with a painting of a Ford Trimotor, a jump helmet, and T-shirts for his grandchildren. During the day he had the opportunity to talk to the President and mention his role with the 439th Troop Carrier Group in WWII.

Fred returned from the war and entered a career that would make him a smokejumping legend. He was responsible for training the new recruits and often referred to the trainees as "My boys." Many of the recruits referred to Fred jokingly as "Good Deal" Brauer.

By 1950 he had been appointed the Director of Personnel at Missoula, where he remained until 1958 when he became Assistant Air Officer in charge of Retardant and Helicopter projects. He decided in 1960 to learn to pilot helicopters and transferred to Equipment and Development as Air Development Officer at the San Dimas, Calif., Development Center. He returned to Missoula in 1963 and built the Lolo View Manor mobile home park.

Fred was one of the true pioneers of smokejumping and made several appearances on the History Channel and various other documentaries. He was the second member of the National Smokejumper Association.

In 2002, Fred wrote that he still hears from many of his boys as far back as 1941-42. "We had the best firefighting organization that the Forest Service ever had. Many of the boys were recommended to the CIA and did a tremendous service to the country during the Vietnam War. I am sure all of my boys will agree with me. They came into the jumpers as young boys without much experience. They left with great work ethics, wonderful esprit de corps and a new confidence. I don't know of a one of them who was not successful in their choice of vocation. I am extremely proud of the personnel and the organization during my tenure."

*(end of excerpt)*