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## Smokejumper Obituary: Manchester, Robert W. "Bob" (Missoula 1946)

National Smokejumper Association

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# Smokejumper Obituary

## **Manchester, Robert W. "Bob" (Missoula 1946)**

On Thursday, Oct. 28, 1999, we lost a husband and companion, a father, a good friend, a skier, a soldier. Robert W. Manchester passed quietly surrounded by his family and friends, and the caring staff of the Missoula Hospice House.

Bob was born June 21, 1919, on a farm near Preble, N.Y., to Nellie E. Rowland Manchester and Henry L. Manchester. He attended schools at Bromley, Preble, Tully and Syracuse, N.Y., and graduated from Mount Herman Prep School, Massachusetts in 1937.

After graduating from Mount Herman, Bob moved to Missoula to pursue both a college education and his passion for alpine skiing. He attended the University of Montana one year as a Sigma Phi Epsilon pledge. Bob then became instrumental in organizing ski trains from Missoula, each carrying about 300 people up the Blackfoot. It was only natural during this time (1937-42) that he met Jan Boissevain (owner and operator of the Double Arrow Dude Ranch) and through this friendship started one of Montana's first ski areas at the Double Arrow. He worked there until April 1942.

He enlisted in the Tenth Mountain Infantry, an elite highly trained Army division at the age of 22. In 1942, he was selected for the Columbia Icefield Expedition in Canada and later that year assigned to K Company, 87th Regiment at Camp Hale, Colo. He took part in the amphibious landing in the attack of Kiska in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska in 1943. He was promoted to platoon sergeant during his tour of duty in Italy in 1945 and was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. Later in 1945, he was selected to accompany the Brazilian Expeditionary Force to Brazil. He was discharged Nov. 2, 1945, with the rank of Technical Sergeant.

Bob returned to U of M to complete his college education and earned a degree in geology and was a member of the U of M Ski Team. He completed one year of graduate studies at Syracuse University. Bob was a smokejumper with the U.S. Forest Service from 1946-53 and continued on with the Forest Service with a career in the minerals and geology branch for the Northern Region and retiring as branch chief in 1980. In 1951, he married Joanne Wold of Alexander, N.D., a teacher in Missoula. They built a home in Target Range area and a second Mountain House at Big Mountain, near Whitefish, where he first skied during Christmas 1937. Their three sons all participated in the ski racing program at Big Mountain. Bob served on the board of directors of the Alpinglow Inn at Big Mountain for the last 10 years. After Bob retired from the Forest Service, he devoted much of his time to developing friendships with members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. During his work at the Double Arrow Ranch, he became close friends with several tribal members. Bob captured the spirit of these relationships through the use of photography. His pictures documented the cultural events and life of these people. He willingly shared these pictures and gave encouragement to the younger generation to continue their education. Through sharing his knowledge and compassion, he became known to them as "Grandpa Bob." Bob is survived by his wife, Joanne.

*(end of excerpt)*