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Smokejumper Obituary: Lundrigan, Merle E. (Missoula 1941)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Lundrigan, Merle E. (Missoula 1941)

Merle, 84, died February 4, 1992, in Missoula, Montana. He was born in 1907 in Farlington, Kansas, and moved to Puyallup, Washington, at one year of age. After graduating from high school, he went to work with the USFS as a seasonal employee and moved to Missoula in 1927 and received a permanent appointment in 1933.

Merle rookied in 1941 at age 34 and also was the Smokejumper Project Leader that season and the 1942 season. He was involved in the smokejumper program in 1940 but not as a jumper and was "assigned as a squadleader for the group." Earl Cooley, in his description of the first fire jump on July 12, 1940, said that "Merle Lundrigan asked me to go on a fire at the head of Marten Creek." Rufus Robinson and Cooley spotted themselves and Lundrigan dropped the cargo. It was reported that Merle almost fell out of the aircraft during the cargo drop.

Merle served in the Navy 1942-45 and went to the Siskiyou N.F. in 1946 to head up the smokejumpers at the Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, Oregon. Cliff Marshall and Bill Green assisted Lundrigan with the 20-man crew made up of all veterans, the majority having been paratroopers. He returned to Missoula in 1947 and retired from the position of general supply officer at the Aerial Fire Depot in May 1962 after more than 30 years of service.

(end of excerpt)