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Smokejumper Obituary: Case, Benjamin W. (Missoula 1944)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Case, Benjamin W. (Missoula 1944)

Ben passed away Feb. 16, 2005, at Horizon Hospice House (Billings, Mont.) at the age of 86. He was born July 22, 1918, in Greenport, New York, a descendant of a family that settled in New England in the mid-1600s. In 1937, he left Shelter Island, N.Y., and moved to Brooklyn to pursue an education at Browne's Business College.

After being drafted into Civilian Public Service, in 1944, he volunteered to be a smokejumper and headed to Nine Mile with his brother, George, for training. Ben made 11 jumps that first season and followed that with eight fire jumps during the busy 1945 season. Ben had always wanted to fly and Jerry Verhelst, one of the Johnson pilots, gave him lessons after work. He was discharged in 1946 and returned to the east coast.

Ben had fallen in love with Missoula and moved his family to Montana in 1949 where he worked as an accountant, first in the dairy business and later for a trucking firm, retiring in 1983.

Ben was a private pilot and enjoyed soaring in his later years.

(end of excerpt)