

July 2022

Smokejumper Obituary: Robertson, William Joseph "Bill" (Missoula 1957)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Robertson, William Joseph â€œBillâ€• (Missoula 1957)

Bill, 86, died July 6, 2022, at his home in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, January 12, 1936. Bill began his undergraduate studies at the University of South Dakota (USD) and transferred to Carroll College in Helena, Montana, where he graduated in 1960. Bill started his firefighting as a lookout before his rookie year at Missoula in 1957. He jumped at Missoula that season, Grangeville 1959-61, and Fairbanks 1962, 65-69. When Bill started his work in Fairbanks, he enrolled in the University of Alaska as a graduate student in parasite physiology but started fulltime work with the BLM in 1965. He was one of the four â€œengineer jumpersâ€• who parachuted out of helicopters to set survey marks in remote areas of Alaska.

By 1967, Bill was Chief of Fire Support, and in 1972, he became BLM Chief of Public Affairs until his retirement in 1994. He made 192 jumps without injury during his smokejumper career. Three days after he retired, Bill took the position of President of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce where he worked until 1998.

(end of excerpt)