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Smokejumper Obituary: Bender, Walter L. "Ozzie" (Missoula 1947)

National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Bender, Walter L. â€œOzzieâ€• (Missoula 1947)

Ozzie, 95, died June 29, 2022, in Tacoma, Washington. He was born November 12, 1926, at the family home in Oak Park, Illinois. Ozzie graduated from Oak Park-River Forest H.S. and entered the University of Michigan before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1944. He trained in B-29s and was assigned as a flight engineer on B-26 aircraft in the European Theater of WWII. After the end of the war, Ozzie stayed in the Air Force Reserve and retired as a Major in 1986. He returned to the Univ. of Michigan and earned his degree in Forestry in 1949 while jumping at Missoula during the 1947-48 seasons. While employed by the Ahonen Lumber Company, he earned a masterâ€™s in Forestry Management in 1950.

Ozzie worked as a forester in Liberia, Haiti, and as a forestry advisor for the U.S. State Dept. to the government of Columbia. He continued to work in Columbia until 1961 when he joined the Weyerhaeuser Company in Tacoma to oversee their operations in Mexico, Central America, Japan, and South Africa. In 1976 he was loaned to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization working in Italy, France, Germany, and Tunisia. In 1985 Ozzie established his own consulting business working with Forest Industries worldwide. He retired from his forty-six-year career in 1996. Over that period, he worked in 57 countries. Ozzie enjoyed running and ran the Sound-To-Narrows 10K race for many years.

(end of excerpt)