



Willard L. "Bill" Ward

August 17, 1916 - June 19, 2017

Willard Leroy Ward (Bill) passed away on June 19th, 2017, at the age of 100 while home resting in his own bed.

Bill was born on August 17, 1916, in Spiro, Oklahoma to Robert J. and Maude C. Ward. The family moved to Elkhart when he was 3 years old and he attended public schools in the area. He was preceded in death by the "love of his life" and wife of 62 years, Bertie Maxine Ward. Bill and Maxine were married in Houston, Texas in 1946 after his return from active duty during WWII.

Mr. Ward joined the Air Force on December 8, 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. While in the Air Force he flew on a B17 as a "waist" gunner and was based in England with the Eighth Air Force. He served his first tour of 25 missions, only to later return and fly on another 18 missions before the war ended. Bill was wounded over France on July 4th, 1943, and earned 3 commendations on that single mission; those awards being the Silver Star, Purple Heart, and Air Medal. Later he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Distinguished Unit Citation, and 7 more oak clusters for the Air Medal. After active duty he was in the reserves for 13 years. His most recent B17 was named "The Spirit of America" and years later he could recall every crew member's name and their home town. Serving at 26 years of age, he was known as the "the old man" on the crew.

After active duty he returned to life in Palestine, Texas where he worked for Texas Power and Light Company and retired after 35 years of service.

He was preceded in death by sisters, Tillie Cundiff and LaCretia Vickery; brother, T.R. Ward and half- brother, Hugh Moore; and son, Donald Ray Ward.

He leaves behind a son, Dennis Ward and wife Charlotte of Fort Worth; daughter, Vicky Letson and husband Steve of Dallas, and daughter, Leisa Kirby and husband Steve of Palestine. Also survived by three grandchildren - Aaron Ward of Austin, Melissa Ward of Palestine, and Kameron Willard of Palestine; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and

great grandchildren.

Always active in his Church life at Calvary Baptist Church, Bill also enjoyed gardening, yard work, and various community service projects.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to a favorite charity or non-profit organization.

Funeral Services will be held at 2 P.M. on Friday, June 23, 2017, at Calvary Baptist Church with Military Graveside Services to follow at Land of Memory Cemetery. Arrangements are under the direction of Herrington / Land of Memory Funeral Home.

Visitation and condolence calls are scheduled from 5-7 P.M. on Thursday, June 22, 2017, at Herrington / Land of Memory Funeral Home.

Pallbearers will be Kameron Willard, Bennett Gierkey, Tommy Gunnels, Randell Ward, Alfred Black, and Jimmy Chambers. Honorary pallbearers are Billy Dunnam and Tyrone Morrison.

Cemetery

Land of Memory

North US HWY 287 toward Corsicana

Palestine, TX, 75801

Comments



“ Always kind and with a smile for everyone, Mr. Ward was ever admired and respected. He was like another Dad to all of us who lived in the Gardner Drive Addition. His quiet but firm leadership helped us all know what was right and proper. I am so grateful for his example, and to have known him was truly a blessing. Mr. Ward will never be forgotten.

Terry Westmoreland - 9 hours ago