



## Waldon Richey

May 29, 2008

Retired Command Sgt. Major Waldon Lee "Rich" Richey, 84, received his final promotion May 29, 2008, in North Fort Myers, Fla. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, June; two sons, Michael Richey (Mary) of Cape Girardeau, Ron Richey (Jeannie) of Lehigh, Fla.; three grandchildren, Betsy Richey (Greg Deimund), Charles Waldon Richey (Crystal Koch Richey), Daniel Richey (Heather and daughter Rhiann); five great-grandchildren, Davis and Clayton Deimund, Garrett, Max and Camille Richey. Rich was blessed with additional family from Lisa and Jeff Kight, Jeff and Kathy Emmenderfer, Jason and Amy Emmenderfer, Lynn and Brian Thompson and their children. Born July 12, 1923, in Mount Summit, Ind., as a "Depression Baby," he set a high school state record in pole vault with a bamboo pole, no spikes, and tried out with the Brooklyn Dodgers. In a typical "greatest generation" move, he tried to join the Navy at age 17 to fight the Japanese. He got in at 18, shot down six planes as a top turret gunner in the Aleutian Islands, making nine-hour bombing runs every third night to northern Japan. After "the" war, marriage and a stint as a civilian, he returned to the military life he loved, this time the Army Combat Engineers. He began in Custer's base, Fort Riley, Kan., then West Germany, where he helped clear land mines in Hansel and Gretel's Black Forest and befriended former Nazi Storm Troopers in decimated post World War II Europe. Then he moved to Maryland, the Korean conflict, Ohio and Cape Girardeau as a regular Army adviser to the reserve in Southeast Missouri, located in the Arena Building. While in Cape Girardeau he was active in First

Christian Church and Cub and Boy Scouts. He then returned to Germany, Fort Lewis, Wash., and a 1967 tour of South Vietnam Central Highlands as battalion sergeant major (equivalent to the role Sam Elliott played in "We Were Soldiers"). He was awarded 14 medals and numerous citations. "Retiring" Rich worked for Boeing in Seattle and was founding president of Lakewood Lions Club and active in VFW. Again he moved back to Cape Girardeau as a city street inspector and assisting in the transformation of Old Lorimier School to the current city hall. He was a member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and a 32nd Degree Mason. "Really retiring" to Florida, he was active in FISH, hospice, veterans groups, and was a member of a band that toured Southwest Florida. He enjoyed dancing, fishing and golf, despite being blind the past 18 years. A celebration of life service will be held at 1:30 p.m, Sunday, June 29 at Ford and Sons Mount Auburn Funeral Home, with the Rev. James Seyer officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations are requested to any hospice.