

Elbert George Middleton

Jerseyville | Sunday, March 7 2010

Elbert George Middleton, a long-time resident of Alton and Godfrey, died at 9:15 p.m. Sunday, March 7, 2010 at Willow Rose Rehabilitation and Health Care Facility in Jerseyville. He was 92.

Mr. Middleton was born to James and Effie Middleton (nee Taylor) in Alton on August 8, 1917.

He graduated from Alton High School in 1936 in the same class as Robert Wadlow, and was a personal friend as well as a classmate. Deferred from service in World War II because of his employment at the then-Western Cartridge Company in East Alton, he nevertheless volunteered for the U.S. Navy and saw extensive combat service in the South Pacific as part of the inaugural crew of the USS Knudson, a high-speed transport ship. He was among the first Americans to enter Tokyo after the Japanese surrendered in 1945. Returning from the war Mr. Middleton, who had been an outstanding athlete at Alton High School, was offered a minor league contract with the St. Louis Cardinals organization on the strength of his hitting, but turned it down because he felt baseball didn't offer enough security to support a family. Instead he returned to his job with what became Olin Corporation, from which he retired in 1980. He remained a scratch golfer well into his 70s. A member of the Salvation Army as a youth, Mr. Middleton became a founding member of the East Side Baptist Church in Alton, where he was a deacon and choir director, and subsequently a member of Heartland Baptist Church of Alton. He was active in the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1308. After he retired he and his wife traveled widely. He fathered two children, Timothy, of Short Hills, N.J., and Sandra Kay, of Burlingame, Calif., who survive him. The family resided in Alton.

In addition to his children he is survived by two daughters-in-law, Edelgard Burris of Godfrey and Joyce Middleton of Short Hills, NJ, three grandchildren, Brendan, Michael and Margaret Middleton, and two great-grandchildren, Kevin and Brynne Middleton, all of New Jersey, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Mr. Middleton was the sixth of nine brothers and sisters, most of whom spent their adult lives in the Alton area. Lorraine Ruth, Delmar, Elmer, Orville, Mansie, Vera Kitzmiller, Ruby Fletcher and Beulah Miller all predeceased him, as did his parents, his first wife, Freda (nee Mansfield), the daughter of Russell and Mae Mansfield of Alton, his second wife, Naomi Burris (nee Cleveland), and a step-son, Richard Burris.

Visitation will be from 12:00 noon until time of funeral service at 1:00 p.m. Thursday at Gent Funeral Home in Alton. Reverend Dr. Kenneth Morgan will officiate.

Burial will be at Upper Alton Cemetery with full military honors by the VFW Post 1308. In lieu of flowers, his family requests that contributions be made in his name to the ASPCA.

Online guestbook and information may be found at www.gentfuneralhome.com.