

# **Dr. Francis “Frank” Vonnahmen**

**Godfrey | Saturday, November 8 2014**

Dr. Francis “Frank” Vonnahmen, 89, died at 5:55 p.m. Saturday, November 08, 2014 at Blu-Fountain Manor. Born October 24, 1924 in Alton, he was the son of Henry and Mary (Daley) Vonnahmen. Dr. Vonnahmen was a longtime dentist in Alton. He was a member of St. Ambrose Catholic Church in Godfrey, the Alton Knights of Columbus, the Godfrey Lions Club, the Alton Eagles Foe No. 254, and the Alton Godfrey Rotary Club. On December 27, 1948 he married the former Patricia Poterack in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She preceded him in death. Surviving is a son, Michael H. Vonnahmen of Springfield, IL, a daughter, Barbara Ann Moore (Richard) of Panama, a grandson, Tyler Vonnahmen of Springfield, IL, and a cousin, Reverend Robert Vonnahmen of Belleville. Along with his wife he was preceded in death by a son, Patrick F. Vonnahmen. Dr. Vonnahmen served in the U.S. Army and often reflected on an Army career that allowed him contact with legendary military personnel during both World War II and the Korean War. Vonnahmen enlisted in the Army on December 4, 1942, during World War II. At the time, he was attending the University of Illinois in Champaign, taking courses in the pre-dental curriculum. “The attack on Pearl Harbor inspired me to want to enlist in World War II,” Vonnahmen said. In August 1944, he was discharged during a shortage of dentists. He completed his course work at Saint Louis University and rejoined the Army on August 1, 1948. In 1950, he joined the forces in Korea, working as a dentist. In 1950, at Fort Benning, GA, the Alton dentist worked on General Omar Bradley with President Harry Truman waiting on him outside the clinic. He said he was nervous about working on General Bradley and replaced a permanent filling. When he finished with Bradley, the general said, “Thank you, son.” Vonnahmen said that meant more to him then and still does today than almost anything that happened to him in the service because Bradley was such a high-ranking general. “You would do anything for a man like that,” Vonnahmen said of Bradley. When Vonnahmen finished with Bradley, he stepped outside and



President Truman tipped his cap to him, while Vonnahmen saluted. In 1943, at Camp Grant in Rockford, IL, the Alton dentist met Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin Roosevelt. The Alton dentist was given six Bronze battle stars on his campaign ribbon while in Korea. He also earned the American Theater Campaign Medal and Good Conduct Medal in World War II. He was awarded a United States and Korean Presidential Citation in Korea and the Army Commendation Medal when retired from the Army. Once in Japan, Vonnahmen had the privilege of seeing General Douglas MacArthur. "I stopped and saluted him," Vonnahmen said. "He had his corn cob pipe in his pocket." On June 30, 1967, the Alton man left the Army, not wanting to continue serving with the war in Vietnam because he had three children with his wife, Patricia. Vonnahmen opened a private dental practice at 305 Elm in Alton and operated that for 20 years until retiring in 1987. He also retired from the Army. "I loved being a dentist," he said. "It was like everything else; I did it until my fingers hurt too much." He said he has had a wonderful life and is glad he served in World War II and the Korean War. "I loved the Army," he said. "Once I was in the Army, I had all these brothers. I had 20 years and four months in the Army." Visitation for Dr. Vonnahmen will be from 4:00-7:00 p.m. Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at Gent Funeral Home in Alton. A Mass of Christian burial will be at 10:30 a.m. Thursday at St. Ambrose Catholic Church in Godfrey. Father Steve Pohlman will officiate. Burial will be at 2:00 p.m. Thursday at Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield, IL. With full military honors. Memorials may be made to the St. Ambrose Catholic Church. Online guestbook and information may be found at [www.gentfuneralhome.com](http://www.gentfuneralhome.com)