

Jesse Curtis Wilkins | 1923-2015

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Lt. Col. Jesse Curtis Wilkins

Lt. Col. Jesse Curtis Wilkins, 91, of Chico died Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2015, in Chico. Graveside service is 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, at Chico Cemetery.

Jesse Curtis Wilkins was born Nov. 29, 1923, in Portland, Ore., to Dovie and Jesse Eric Wilkins. After living in Oregon and California in his very early years, he moved in with relatives on a dairy farm in Weatherford.

After high school, he worked at the old Montgomery Ward building in Fort Worth, where he met his wife of 73 years, Jimmie Ruth Pebworth. During their first year of marriage, Jesse joined the Army Air Corps and after schooling became a pilot. He flew 40-plus missions during World War II in the Italian theater in his P-51, Ginning Jimmie.

After the war, he remained in the Air Force and after 23 years of service retired with a rank of lieutenant colonel. He then turned in his wings for a tractor and worked as a farmer and rancher with a herd of black Angus on 140 acres in Chico.

He and Jimmie were active members of the First Baptist Church in Chico, and he was a deacon for many years there.

Lt. Col. Jesse Wilkins was truly an exceptional man of the greatest generation. He will be sorely missed by his family and friends.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Donald Wilkins, and his son, Ronald Wilkins. He is survived by his wife, Jimmie; daughters Pamela Rohr and Patti Biffar; daughter-in-law Beverly Wilkins; grandchildren Jesse Wayne Wilkins and wife, Denise, Angela Wilkins, Aaron Biffar and Andrea Biffar and husband, J.D. Jones; six great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews; and a myriad of friends.