



Jesse "Pete" Rayford Henson

March 24, 1923 - May 7, 2016

Obituary: Jesse Rayford "Pete" Henson

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Jesse Rayford "Pete" Henson, 93 of Paulden took the ultimate flight of his life, flying higher than he has ever flown before, on May 7, 2016, to be with our Lord in heaven.

Service will be at 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 14, 2016, at Sunrise Funeral home in Prescott Valley.

He was preceded in death by his parents, many of his brothers and sisters and his daughter, Robin.

Pete was born in Chillicothe, Texas, on March 24, 1923, to Ora Alice Price and Claude Herman Henson. He was one of 12 children. As a young man, he moved to Winslow, Arizona, and began working for the Santa Fe Railroad. He later joined the Army during WWII and served in the Armored Forces as a member of the 736th Medium Tank Battalion (Special). Also known as the "Kid Battalion," they trained at Camp Bouse on a secret project. When training was completed, Pete saw combat with the 736th in France, Belgium and Germany,

including “The Battle of the Bulge.” After the war, he returned to Arizona where he married Barbara Jean Casey, his wife of 66 years. Together Pete and Barbara had nine children, Jeanne Jackson (Greg) of Minot, North Dakota; Daniel Henson (Clydine) of Holbrook, Arizona; Robin Barrett (Jerry) of Holbrook, Arizona; Peter Henson of Paulden, Arizona; Kathleen Henson-Barney (Jay) of Chino Valley, Arizona; Tom Henson of Holbrook, Arizona; Linda Robertson (Josiah) of Tucson, Arizona; Carolyn Henson of Tucson, Arizona; and Beth Henson of Casa Grande, Arizona. They had 16 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

During his life, he was employed in aviation as a pilot, instructor, examiner, fixed base operator. “Sky King,” as he was known in the air, also flew search and rescue missions for the Civil Air Patrol. He eventually retired from the Santa Fe Railroad to Wenden, Arizona, and then Paulden, Arizona, where he resided at the time of his death.

Pete was known for his quick wit, guitar playing, sense of humor and storytelling. He was an avid reader, enjoyed crossword puzzles and had a vast knowledge of history; he even served as historian for the 736th Battalion for a number of years and contributed his knowledge to the writing of several books about the 736th.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or Wounded Warrior Project.

Sunrise Funeral Home was entrusted with the arrangements.

Information provided by survivors.

Tribute Wall



“ *Jesse "Pete" Rayford Henson*

January 30, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *My Father fought in WWII with Pete in the 736th "Kid Battalion" tank brigade out of Camp Rucker. I would love to meet Pete's family to learn more about our fathers time in WWII.*

Paul Stark - March 02, 2018 at 06:03 PM



pete was heck of a guy. hed take me and his son peter for a ride in a plane. thinking we would be hungover hed do all sorts of crazy stuff which was quite amazing. hed look at us everyonce in awhile. thinkin wed be getting sick. we didnt but enjoyed the ride he gave us; it was pretty impressive the manuevers he put the cessna thru

ed - November 30, 2024 at 03:06 PM