

Ralph Conte Sr., 1917-2016

Sunday, April 3, 2016 at 12:00 am

Ralph Francis Conte Sr., 98, died Friday, April 1, 2016, at Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital in Columbia.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Monday, April 4, at the Truman Memorial Hospital Chapel. Inurnment will be Wednesday, April 6, at the Missouri State Veteran's Cemetery in Jacksonville.

Ralph was born May 8, 1917, in Paterson, N.J., to Angelina and Salvatore Conte, who emigrated from Italy to the United States. Ralph had three brothers and three sisters.

He attended Eastside High School in Paterson, N.J. Ralph worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps to help support his family during the Great Depression.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps during World War II. Ralph served as a bombardier/navigator in the 9th Air Force, 416th Bomb Group, in the European Theater, where he flew 65 missions, including two on D-Day. While serving, he earned a Purple Heart, Distinguished Flying Cross and the French Croix de Guerre. Ralph authored a book, "Attack Bombers: We Need You," about his WWII service.

On April 15, 1945, he married Norma Zanetti, who preceded him in death in 2009.

He graduated from Rutgers University in 1955, using the Montgomery G.I. Bill. He worked as a management executive in wastewater treatment in New Jersey, Illinois, Kansas and Texas during his career. While living in Mineral Wells, Texas, he served on the city council. He also hosted a local talk radio show but admonished listeners not to be "vituperative" or "vitriolic."

He moved to Columbia with Norma in 2002 to be close to family.

He participated in a Central Missouri Honor Flight trip.

He married Margaret (Margy) Harrison on Sept. 18, 2010. He was an exceptional bridge player, was proud of a hole-in-one, actively participated in the 416th Bomb Group reunions well into his 90s and loved volunteering with Margy at Truman Memorial.

Ralph is survived by wife, Margy; son Ralph (Rafe) Conte Jr. of Montreal, Canada; daughter Jan (Bill) Mees of Columbia; grandsons Jeff (Teresa) Mees of Columbia and Greg (Julia) Mees of Liberty; great-grandchildren Jensen, Evan and Caleb Mees of Columbia and Hannah and Lauren Mees of Liberty; stepson Dan (Geli) Harrison of Fulton; and step-grandsons Bill (Krystal) Harrison of Louisiana, Mo., and Michael Harrison and Tom

Harrison of Fulton.

Memorial contributions can be made in Ralph's memory to Central Missouri Honor Flight, 1400 Forum Blvd., Suite 1-C, Box 334, Columbia, Mo., 65203; Mid-Missouri Alzheimer's Association Greater Missouri, 2400 Bluff Creek Drive, Columbia, Mo., 65201; or to a charity of the donor's choice.

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