

Manford J. Wetzel 1940

Cullum No. 11896 • Oct 29, 1980 • Died in San Diego, CA

Interred in West Point Cemetery, West Point, NY



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My brother, *Manford Jay Wetzel*, was born on 27 July 1915 in Billings, Montana, to Emery J. and Myrtle Scott Wetzel. He attended grammar school and high school in Riverside, California.

In 1936 he realized the culmination of a life-long ambition when he was appointed to the Academy at West Point. I received the news at Luke Field, Hawaii, and was so excited and pleased that I shot out the street lights around the officer's club—not the most proper action for an "officer and gentleman."

I reported myself the next morning to one great commanding officer, Colonel Asa North Duncan. After hearing my story, he said, "I am very pleased for your brother. The lights are 'on the house'."

After graduation, Manford reported to his initial duty station in Ontario, California, for primary flight training.

During the next twenty-seven years of active military service, Manford was assigned to increasingly responsible and challenging career opportunities. Some of these included: Base Commander, Morton Air Academy, Blythe, California; in September 1943 he became commander of the 379th Bomb Squadron on detached duty with the Royal Air Force operating from Gambut, Libya; "Wetzel's Weasels," as they called themselves, made an enviable record against shipping in the Aegean Sea. In 1945 he was assigned to Operations Division, War Department General Staff, Washington, DC; he continued with the Air Staff, Operations and Training Division as executive officer to General Norstad, United States Air Force Headquarters; later he transferred to Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Tucson, Arizona, as Deputy Commander of the 303d Bomb Wing; then Deputy Commander Air Material Command, Wheeler Air Force Base, Hawaii; Office of Inspector General, San Bernardino, California; Assistant Chief Military Assistance Advisory Group Pakistan; and Commanding Officer, Brooks Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. His awards include eight Air Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

During his active duty career, Manford attended Stanford University Graduate School for two years, earning his master's in Business Administration. He also attended the National War College, graduating in 1955.

Manford's early retirement in 1967 was necessitated by the first of two heart attacks; the second, in 1977, requiring open heart surgery.

Manford and Gertrude Grant "Trudie" were married 25 April 1942. Their son Robert, a graduate of West Point, Class of 1956, was killed in an aircraft accident at McDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, in 1959. Their daughter Patricia and grandson Scott, are in San Antonio, Texas, where her husband, Major David G. Wood, is stationed with the Air Force.

Following his retirement, Manford and Trudie returned to Pakistan where they had many friends. For the next two years he managed the Embassy commissaries in Pakistan, and supplied the ones in India and Afghanistan.

Upon their return to the states, Manford and Trudie made their home in Southern California, and have lived in Coronado since 1975.

Manford was blessed with the ability to make friends easily. He was cheerful, compassionate, and made people feel good. He is mourned by the many who loved and respected him.

He is survived by wife Trudie, daughter Patricia, grandson Scott; sister, Mrs. O.B. Evans of Spokane, Washington; and his brother, Lieutenant General Emery S. Wetzel, United States Air Force Retired, Coronado, California.

—ESW