



# Jerome H. Gregory

OCT 15, 1922 - JUN 21, 2015



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## **Jerome H. Gregory**

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**R**odney - Jerome Henry Gregory, 92, of Rodney, passed away on Sunday, June 21, 2015 in Big Rapids, just three months shy of his 93rd birthday. Jerome was born on October 15, 1922 in Rodney, the son of Ray and Emma (Vonglahn) Gregory. During the Second World War, Jerome qualified as a pilot in the fledgling Army Air Force. As an Air Cadet in Montgomery, AL, he trained in the BT-13 Valiant. His training quickly led to an assignment in the B-24 Liberator as a flight instructor. For the duration of WWII, he trained B-24 pilots for the European theater. After a brief period in civilian life, he returned to the new United States Air Force and flew the B-29 Superfortress out of Lockbourne AFB in Columbus, OH. He was temporarily assigned duty in the territory of Guam, where he participated in early atomic weapons testing in the South Pacific. As the Cold War heated up, he was assigned to the Strategic Air Command flying in the B-47 Stratojet as an aircraft commander of a Combat Ready Crew pulling nuclear ground and airborne alert. He progressed to become a flight instructor and flight examiner in Standards and Evaluation. His duty stations were Little Rock AFB in Arkansas, Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, AZ and Lincoln AFB in NE. As the B-47 ended its operational service, Jerome was transferred to the Military Airlift Command at Travis AFB in California and qualified as an aircraft commander in the new long range cargo aircraft, Lockheed's C-141 StarLifter. During the Vietnam conflict he flew many missions from California to Southeast Asia. He ferried supplies from the U.S. to the Philippines, Japan and Vietnam. On return trips, he carried the combat wounded and returning troops. Jerome served a one year tour of duty in Da Nang, Vietnam as the Commander of the Airlift Control Element (ALCE) where he was awarded the Bronze Star. He amassed thousands of flying hours during his career and retired as a highly decorated full Colonel in the United States Air Force with 27 years of dedicated service to his country. "The Colonel," as he was fondly referred to by family and friends, retired to the family



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farm in Rodney where he raised cattle and field crops. He was a member of the B.P.O. Elks # 974 and the former Meceola Country Club. Jerome was preceded in death by his wife of 69 years, Doris Jeanette First and his brother, Marvin D. Gregory. He is survived by his sister, Joanne (John) Emmons; and three loving children, Pat (Manuel) Escobar, Alan (Connie) Gregory; and Steve Gregory. In addition, he leaves a legacy of 11 grandchildren, many great grandchildren, and several great-great grandchildren. His generosity, sense of humor, and strength of character will be missed. Services will be held on Friday, July 10, 2015 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Mohnke Funeral Home in Big Rapids. A military salute featuring an Honor Guard from the Wright Patterson AFB will immediately follow.



## Tribute Wall

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LN

**Lee Nelsen** posted:

Steve this news saddens me yet his remarkable legacy will surely live on for you and all of his family and friends. Please find a way to celebrate it. Be thankful that you had him in this life for all those years.

June 27 at 8:00 PM

BL

**Bob & Carol Large** posted:

Allan and family.. we were saddened to hear of your dad's passing. He was a wonderful, talented person and one we always enjoyed being around. Our sympathies to you but may the fond memories comfort you. Bob and Carol

June 24 at 8:00 PM

JS

**Joani (Wolverton) Slager** posted:

Condolences to all. My Mom and Dad used to have a lot of fun visiting Uncle Jerry and Aunt Doris at the farm. Vern and I will not be able to attend. Blessing to you all.

June 23 at 8:00 PM

KD

**Kevin Doyle** posted:

Jerome was one of the VIP's in my life. We have been very fortunate to have him as our neighbor to our Doyle Family hunting property. A privilege and honor to know "The Colonel".

June 22 at 8:00 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Jerome by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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