



Robert Lawrence Zeller

February 10, 1923 - October 17, 2015

Robert “Bob” Zeller, age 92 years, of south Toledo, passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 17, 2015, at The Lakes of Monclova.

Bob was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1923. He grew up during the Great Depression, and his experiences during that time shaped him and taught him lessons in frugality and the importance of family that would serve him for the rest of his life.

In 1941, a few months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Bob graduated from Macomber High School in Toledo, Ohio. In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps out a love for his country and an enthusiasm for flying he had developed watching airplanes as a child. Despite several very close calls, Bob flew 18 missions in B-24 Liberators over Germany as a radio operator and bombardier. In November of 1944, during his 18th mission, his plane was shot down over Germany. His pilot managed to navigate the plane into a farmer’s field in France before it crashed. Although several crew members died, Bob survived, despite a broken neck, a shattered arm, and other injuries. He spent 12 months in the hospital recovering.

Bob was awarded a Purple Heart, an Air Medal, two Oak Leaf Clusters, a European Theater of Operations battle star, a good conduct medal, a WWII victory medal, and two major battle stars.

When Bob returned from the War, he married his sunshine, Antoinette “Toni” Zeller, in October 1945. He worked for IBM for 32 years as a Senior Customer Engineer and retired in 1982. He loved his job and interacting with his

customers.

Due to his many close brushes with death, Bob lived his life with a rare optimism and appreciation and enjoyed sharing his wonderful sense of humor with others. He loved spending time with his wife, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. His family was always his first priority. Bob's proudest accomplishment was his 65-year marriage to Toni. Leading up to Toni's death in 2010, Bob lived his love for her and cared for her selflessly and with his typical positive outlook.

Bob loved his family, his country, corny jokes, piping hot coffee (especially with his friends at Panera Bread), fishing, singing old country songs, competing with his neighbors for "biggest tomato," and every dog he ever met. He could fix anything, and spent hours on woodworking projects which he proudly displayed and shared with his family. Bob openly discussed his experiences in WWII and regularly shared his story with local students studying the War.

Bob was a member of VFW Post 1115, Disabled American Veterans, The Eighth Air Force Historical Society (Savannah), the Kassel Mission Historical Society, the American Air Museum in Britain, the National WWII Museum (New Orleans and Washington D.C.), the Mighty 8th Air Historical Society (St. Paul), and the Southside Sportsman Club.

Bob is preceded in death by his wife, Toni; his parents, Leo and Ethel; his sisters, Virginia and Pauline; his brother, Donald; and his grandson, Alaric Zeller.

Bob is survived by his four loving children, Robert (Mary Beth) Zeller, Gregory (Denise) Zeller, Rita Fournier, Julie (Don) Coletta; grandchildren, David Zeller, Michael R. Zeller, Michael J. Zeller, Patty Zeller, Cheryl Zeller, Geoffrey (Polly) Zeller, Jillian Fournier, Jennifer (Matt) McHugh; great-grandchildren, Peyton Hary, Bentley Zeller, Addison Zeller, Andrew Zeller, Zofia Zeller, and Daniel McHugh; sister, Rose (Tom) Taylor; brothers-in-law, Pasquale DiTerlizzi and John Grigore; and many nieces and nephews.

Friends may visit at the Coyle Funeral Home, 1770 S Reynolds Rd., on

Wednesday, Oct. 21, from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p .m., where a scripture service will begin at 7:00 p.m. Funeral services will begin in the mortuary on Thursday, Oct. 22, at 9:30 a.m., followed by the Funeral Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church at 10:00 a.m. The Committal Service will follow at Highland Memory Gardens Cemetery, Waterville, Ohio. Memorial contributions may be made to VFW Post 6170 in Perrysburg, Ohio, or to The National Museum of The Mighty Eighth Air Force in Savannah, Georgia.

Bob's family would like to sincerely thank Heartland Hospice for their expertise and compassion in his final days and the caretakers at The Lakes of Monclova for taking such good care of him for the last seven months, and for their efforts to get to know him so well.

Cemetery Details

Highland Memory Gardens

8308 S River Rd
Waterville, Oh 43566

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **21**. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral and Cremation Services
1770 S. Reynolds Road
Toledo, OH 43614
(419) 865-1295
<https://www.coylefuneralhome.com>

Scripture Service

OCT **21**. 7:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral and Cremation Services
1770 S. Reynolds Road
Toledo, OH 43614
(419) 865-1295
<https://www.coylefuneralhome.com>

Funeral

OCT **22**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
2255 Central Grove
Toledo, OH 43614

Tribute Wall

RZ

“ I remember you cracking walnuts just perfect taking out the nutmeat filling the shell with water, and putting it back in the bowl for the next person to "enjoy"

Rita Zelly - May 25, 2020 at 01:24 AM

LM

“ Dear Julie, Rita, Rob, Greg and family,
My thoughts and prayers are with you all, I have such wonderful memories of the Zeller household, Julie you were my best childhood friend , but everyone made me feel like part of the family. Mr. and Mr. Zeller were like my second parents and Always very kind. My favorite memory was getting our 6wk cockapoo puppy named Tippy and then we brought the Zeller family over to our house to meet Tippy and introduced them to Tippys brother, sooo the story goes we were blessed with Tippy and the Zeller family were blessed with Tippys brother they named Scampee. I wish I could have come to the funeral home but I had to work.. .Some time I would Love to see all of you! May God bring peace to all of you.

Lora McLuckie (Helmbrecht)

Lora McLuckie - October 23, 2015 at 01:44 PM

JC

Thanks so much Lora! We truly were blessed to have had Mom and Dad for so many years. They were both just wonderful! I'm so glad you have such great memories of them too! Thanks for sharing and for thinking of us . :) Julie

Julie Coletta - November 04, 2015 at 10:07 PM

JV

“ Dear Rita, I am so sorry for your loss. I'm sorry I couldn't make it to the funeral home, been really sick, Getting better though. I want to thank you for coming to the funeral home when my mom passed away, and had fully intended on coming, but I could barely walk for the pain in my belly. Just wanted you to know I was thinking about you, and your family and I wish I could have been there for you. Prayers sent for you and your family.

Judy (Gogol) VanderHorst

Judy VanderHorst - October 22, 2015 at 03:34 PM

“ Robert Zeller (1923 - 2015)

WWII Bombardier and Radio Operator an IBM Engineer

(News story) Robert Zeller, who served as a radio operator and bombardier for 18 missions over Germany during World War II before becoming an IBM engineer, died Saturday at The Lakes of Monclova. He was 92. His daughter, Julie Coletta, said he died from multiple organ failure.

Mr. Zeller remained sharp in intellect, and lived independently until March, Ms. Coletta said.

"He was just a personable, gentle, happy soul," she said.

Mr. Zeller was born Feb. 10, 1923, to Leo and Ethel Zeller in Toledo. His loved ones said growing up in the era of the Great Depression instilled in him a sense of thrift and family.

He graduated from Macomber High School in 1941, and the next year joined the U.S. Army Air Corps. By enlisting, he was able to serve the country he loved and pursue his interest in airplanes, Ms. Coletta said.

After repeated flights in the Consolidated B-24 Liberator, Mr. Zeller's plane was shot down in November, 1944, and crashed in a French farm field. He suffered several serious injuries, including a broken neck, and recovered for a year in the hospital.

*About six years ago, Mr. Zeller was profiled for an hour-long online film regarding recollections from the war. In the documentary, *Flying High*, he discussed his military training and missions.*

Mr. Zeller described the sounds of the B-24's engines and wind gusts whipping through the plane while the crew flew at up to about 25,000 feet. He still clearly remembered the explosion of shells in the air. "When they're real close, it's like someone's throwing pebbles at the aluminum," he said. He was awarded several medals for his service, including a Purple Heart. He was later a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Upon returning from the war, he married Antoinette Zeller in October, 1945. They were married 65 years until her death in 2010. He worked for IBM for 32 years as a senior customer engineer, retiring in 1982.

Surviving are his sons, Robert and Gregory; daughters, Julie

Coletta and Rita Fournier; sister, Rose Taylor; eight grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Visitation will be 2 to 8 p.m. today at Coyle Funeral Home where a Scripture service will begin at 7 p.m. The funeral Mass will be at 10 a.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

The family suggests tributes to VFW Post 6170 in Perrysburg or the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Ga.

Blade - October 21, 2015 at 09:06 AM

DS

“ *Rita, Greg and Zeller Family-My thoughts and prayers are with all of you. Your dad was a wonderful person.*

Warmest regards,

Deb Scott - October 21, 2015 at 05:48 AM

RM

“ *Rita , Julie and the rest of your family, May your memories give you comfort and peace. Rosalind Manders and Ruthann Manders (3 doors down from Aunt Lena and Uncle John)*

Rosalind Mandes - October 20, 2015 at 10:43 AM

RO

“ *Sending comfort to the Zeller family in their loss
Renee Manders-Oswalt*

Renee Oswald - October 20, 2015 at 09:49 AM

R-

“ *Dad, you were the most kind, gentle, loving caring, patient, selfless person I knew, may you rest in peace.* ”



Rita Zeller -Fournier - October 19, 2015 at 11:31 PM