

Jack Heitz Wendling, son of William F. Wendling and Gertrude S. Wendling, a resident of Twin Falls, Idaho and formerly a resident of Filer, Idaho passed away February 4, 2021 from complications following a fall.

Jack was well known in Filer as he was a long-time member and past president of Filer Kiwanis, an avid hunter, fisherman, breeder of quarter horses and a skiing enthusiast. Being a retired aeronautical engineer, he was ever willing to discuss the intricacies of aerodynamics and aircraft propulsion systems. He was a pilot and kept an Ercoupe at the Buhl airport.

Jack was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but grew up in Southern Illinois in Harrisburg. After high school, at the age of 17, Jack entered the University of Minnesota as an aeronautical engineering student and member of the springboard diving team. This was in 1942.

Sometime in January, 1943, it was announced that the US Army Air Corps would accept 17 year old applicants for Aviation Cadet Training with acceptable scores on written and physical exams, to be called up at age 18. Jack was sworn in the next day. He was called to active duty in early April, 1943 and selected for pilot training.

Jack graduated from pilot training school on January 7, 1944. At age 18, he was the youngest ever commissioned officer and pilot in the Army Air Corps. Jack then was sent to Montgomery, Alabama for B-24 Bomber training. After a cursory introduction to the bomber, Jack asked how to get assigned to fighter aircraft. The instructor's response was, "You don't think you could fly this airplane?" Jack's responded with, "I can fly the box it came in.". After training, Jack was offered a position as flight instructor, but felt at his age he would lack credibility with the students and proceeded to prepare for a combat assignment.

June 18, 1944 Jack and his high school sweetheart, Alice Kathleen Crebo eloped and were married in Wyoming where he was in bomber crew training.

Jack was stationed in Great Britain. He and his crew flew 30 missions as the lead aircraft over Germany proper. He was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross, The Air Medal four times and 4 of the 5 Battle Stars for the European Theater.

Following the B-24 combat tour, Jack volunteered for the 325th Reconnaissance Wing 8th Air Force and flew one of his favorite airplanes, the Mosquito. He returned home a seasoned veteran at age 20 for a brief leave before an assignment in the Pacific Theater. While at home, news of the Japanese capitulation reached Harrisburg in the middle of the night with the sounds of sirens, church bells and the townspeople celebrating in the streets.

Jack left the Army Air Corps at war's end and he and Kathleen moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan where he graduated as an aeronautical engineer from the University of Michigan

in 1949.

Jack spent his career at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio in the Foreign Technology Division. In 1971, Jack was awarded the Air Force Meritorious Civilian Service Medal. He was the first to be so recognized in the history of the technical intelligence organization he served. He retired in 1973 and moved to Filer, Idaho where he could hunt, fish and ski. He also remained an active pilot and flew his Ercoupe into his 90's.

Jack and Kathleen raised four children; Mark (Kathy)Wendling, Dr. Sue Wendling, Dr. Scott (Eileen) Wendling and Ann Wendling. He is also survived by seven grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.

Jack's wife Kathleen preceded him in death in 2010. Their inurnment will be at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery. No public service is planned at this time. A family gathering with a 21 gun salute will be planned for later this year.

Shortly before his death, Jack self published a book primarily about his experiences in WWII titled, *Achieving Air Supremacy*, available from Amazon.

Services are under the direction of Parke's Magic Valley Funeral Home in Twin Falls, ID.

Those who wish may share memories and condolences on his memorial page at www.magicvalleyfuneralhome.com.