

## Col. Grant Bird dies - pilot in 2 wars



A memorial service will be held Saturday for Grant Bird, a World War II combat pilot who was shot down twice over Europe and spent nearly a year in a German prisoner-of-war camp.

Col. Bird died Dec. 25 at his home in Novato. He was 85.

During World War II, Grant Bird earned his pilot wings and was assigned to an Army Air Forces base in England. While on his 14th combat mission, flying over Nazi-occupied France in 1943 in a Martin B-26 Marauder medium bomber, he was shot down by a combination of German fighter planes and anti-aircraft fire. He bailed out of the plane, was rescued by partisan forces and managed to get safely back to England.

On April 30, 1944, flying his 33rd mission, he wasn't as lucky. His plane was shot down over France again, and he was captured and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. According to Howard Pierson, a retired Air Force pilot and close friend of Col. Bird, the colonel was held by the Germans for 364 days and was released only when his camp was liberated by Allied forces in the spring of 1945, shortly before the war in Europe ended.

After the war, Col. Bird married Jean Stratton and later graduated from the University of Missouri with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. When the Korean War broke out, Col. Bird, then in the Air Force Reserve, went back on active duty and, according to his wife, flew helicopters over Korea, "picking up downed pilots and wounded soldiers." Among his decorations were

the Air Medal with 25 oak leaf clusters and the European and Korean theater ribbons with battle stars.

Col. Bird stayed in the Air Force until 1966, serving at bases in Germany, Saudi Arabia and around the United States. After his retirement, he went into the banking industry, working for Crocker National Bank and Redwood Bank in San Francisco and for Central Bank in Oakland.

Col. Bird was a leader in the Boy Scouts, the Lions Club and the Rotary Club.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by a son, Eldon Bird of San Rafael.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Presbyterian Church, 710 Wilson Ave., Novato.

The family suggests donations to the Marin Council of Boys Scouts of America, 225 West End Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901, or Lions in Sight, 1838 Sunnyvale Ave., Walnut Creek, CA 94957.