

# OBITS

## A Flying Tiger has passed

### John Edward Heller 1916 - 1999

**JOHN EDWARD HELLER** died last week at the age of 82 in Tucson, Arizona, following a brief illness. A funeral mass was held yesterday at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Tucson, where John was one of the original parishioners.

He was born in Oconto, WI, on Sept 1, 1916, the son of Charles Heller and Mildred Murphy Heller. John's mother died when he was age two. His father, his grandmother, Anna Draves Murphy, and her children raised John and his sister, Mary Ellen. The family moved to Kenosha, WI and later Milwaukee, WI where John attended school. John graduated from Lincoln High School in Milwaukee and attended Milwaukee Teacher's College.

Prior to the war, John served with the American Volunteer Group (AVG, more commonly known as the flying Tigers) fighting in Burma and China. He was returning to the United States as a passenger aboard the **Quaker City** when it was torpedoed and sank in the South Atlantic on May 18, 1942. After six days, fishermen rescued him and his fellow survivors off the island of Barbados. He was brought ashore at Martin's Bay, Barbados, on May 24, 1942,



JOHN E. HELLER

and hospitalized by St. John's Ambulance in Bridgetown, Barbados. It was here that he met his future wife, Elsie Dorothy Griffiths. They were married in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on November 5, 1942. In May 1999, John returned to Barbados on the anniversary of his landing, visiting the site with his niece, Sandra Plant.

After his military service, John and Elsie moved to Milwaukee, WI, where their daughter, Ellen, was born. John and Elsie later returned to Barbados where their son, John, was born. After a few years, they again returned to the US and settled in

Northampton, MA, where their sons, Edward and Peter were born. During this time John was employed by Kollmorgen. Following his retirement from Kollmorgen about twenty years ago, John and Elsie moved to Tucson, AZ. His wife, Elsie died in 1997 following a long illness. John remarried in December 1998. His second wife, Katherine Jinks Heller, died in February 1999. John was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, V.F.W. Casa Adobes Post 10188. He was a resident of villa Capri Mobile Home Park.

His granddaughter, Erin Kathleen Heller (daughter of Jack and Michelle Heller) and his two wives Elsie and Kay, preceded him in death. He is survived by his children and grandchildren named: Ellen and her husband, James Lutzow, reside in Florissant, MO; Jack and his wife, Michele, and their children, Sara-Elizabeth, Carol and Ned reside in Snellville, GA; Edward resides in Tucson with his wife, Danita, and their children, Lauren and Stephen; Peter and his wife, Carla, their children, Stacey, Blake and Ciara live in Round Rock, TX.