Orville A. "Mak" Maki

Orville A. Maki, beloved father and grandfather, passed from this life at his home on June 10, 2009.

He was born on Nov. 16, 1919, in Ironwood, Mich., and both his parents were Finnish immigrants who immigrated to America. After completion of high school and junior college, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in May 1941. He received his wings on Dec. 14, 1941, at Ellington Field, Texas.

He was stationed in India during the war and was assigned to fly C-46s on the China/Burma/India route, better known as the "Hump." He received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with oak leaf clusters during his tour of duty and he completed 97 sorties over the Hump. His 23 years in the U.S. Air Force were highlighted by flying in the Berlin Airlift (1948-1949), command pilot of Boeing B-47 stratojet which flew non-stop from Edwards Air Force Base in California to the International Aviation exposition in Detroit on Sept. 4, 1952. This flight recorded the fastest time officially in the world for a jet bomber.

Major Maki was assigned to the Strategic Air Command at Pinecastle AFB (McCoy) from 1952-1956, where he served as an instructor in air refueling and B-47 flight procedures. He was assigned to Eglin AFB from 1956-1958 as a test pilot for armament exercises and from 1958-1962 he flew the C-47 and C-130A model during a tour in Japan. He retired from the Air Force in 1963 as a lieutenant colonel with over 10,000 hours military pilot time, 1000 hours as a civilian, and was a test pilot for Fairchild-Hiller.

He retired to Fort Walton Beach, Fla., in 1963 with his family and both of his children graduated from Choctawhatchee High School. More importantly, he gave back to the community he loved so much. He was a Northwest Florida Track Club member beginning in 1973, raced in the first Billy Bowlegs run in 1975, and remained active for decades. Additionally, he was an art sculptor and his wooden designs could be seen at the Artisan and numerous art shows. Finally, he was the ultimate walker and he will truly be missed by his friends along the route of Monahan, Pocahontas, Revere and Beal Street.

"Mak" participated in the first Emerald Coast Honor Flight honoring World War II veterans in Washington, D.C., at the World War II Memorial. He said "it was the thrill of a lifetime." Special thanks to Congressman Jeff Miller, Tom Rice and all the great volunteers who made this memorable trip possible for all our World War II veterans.

He is survived by his loving daughter, Dianne Lange, husband Jeff, and their beautiful children, Molly and Nathan. He is survived by his loving son, Duff Maki, wife Peggy, and their three lovely daughters, Stephanie, Courtney and Jennifer, and their children Sydney Rene, Carson Lee and Claire Kathleen.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, June 19, at 7 p.m. at Emerald Coast Funeral Home, 113 Racetrack Road N.E., Fort Walton Beach. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors at a designated time later this year.

Expressions of sympathy may be viewed or submitted online at www.emeraldcoastfuneralhome.com.

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