



Joseph E. Ritchey

December 12, 1932 - August 1, 2012

Joe Ritchey of Lindsay, Oklahoma departed this life on Wednesday, August 1, 2012 at St. Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma at the age of 79. Joe was born on December 12, 1932 in Kozenna, Poland. He married Virginia Stearman on August 3, 1956 in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.

Joe came to the United States as a Polish refugee when he was 12 years old with the help of some friends in the Second Division of Battery "C", 38th Field Artillery Battalion at the end of World War II. When the war broke Joe was in the first grade. His village and home was destroyed by the Nazi forces. His father was called to active duty in the Polish Army and was later captured. His mother was killed and his two older sisters were made slave laborers. In 1943, at only 11 years old and orphaned, Joe was shipped to Germany in a box car and was forced to work on a German farm as a prisoner of war. In March, 1945, he was liberated by the Second Division and became their mascot. Joe planned to return to Poland on foot, but the officers and men of his adopted battery had other plans. They decided to smuggle him in a duffle bag aboard ship and take him back to America with them. Everything went according to plan, until a naval officer took notice of the men standing around a suspicious looking duffle bag. Joe was discovered and taken to the ship's captain. The ship was already 75 miles out to sea and Joe refused to identify the men who brought him aboard so the captain continued on. Once in the United States, he was adopted by one of the smugglers, Corporal Lee Roy Ritchey and his

wife, Anita.

In 1953, Joe received his draft papers and citizenship papers. In that same year, he graduated from Tishomingo, Oklahoma with honors in science. Joe later attended Murray State College and East Central University where he majored in Industrial Arts and minored in Social Studies. He received his Master's degree from Southeastern University. Joe taught in Madill, Tuskahoma and Olive before moving to Lindsay in 1969. Joe was honored as Lindsay's Teacher of the Year in 1984. He taught Industrial Arts and middle school classes until his retirement in 1997. He was a member of the St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Lindsay. He served his country in the U.S. Army and in the Oklahoma National Guard. Joe loved keeping his 1952 Mercury in top condition. He also enjoyed gardening and physical fitness.

Mr. Ritchey is survived by his wife, Virginia Ritchey of Lindsay, two daughters: Celeste Price of Seminole, Oklahoma and Regina Bear of Savannah, Georgia, one brother Wendall Ritchey of Ardmore, Oklahoma and his grandchildren: Afton Brauning of Seminole, Oklahoma, Alonna Price of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Jesse Bear of Savannah, Georgia as well as two great-grandchildren: Breanna and Braelyn Brauning. Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Lee Roy and Anita Ritchey.

Funeral services for Mr. Ritchey are set for ten o'clock a.m. on Monday, August 6, 2012 at the St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Lindsay, Oklahoma with Rev. Charles Woltz officiating. Interment will be at the Ft. Sill National Cemetery in Elgin, Oklahoma at two o'clock p.m. the same day. Services are under the direction of B.G. Boydston Funeral Home of Lindsay, Oklahoma. Condolences for the family may be made online at www.boydstonfuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall

WW

“ Joe was a good man and great soldier. A buddy I will never forget. We had some great trips to Germany for training. Have some great stories he told me I will never forget. I am 88 now and will see you again soon, my brother in arms. SFC William A Woodworth Jr, Pauls Valley OK

William Woodworth - June 01, 2023 at 10:54 PM

MG

“ Mr. Ritchey was one of my favorite teachers i had growing up. He was my teacher in 7th grade i believe, could be off on that. He told me stories about what he went thru in the war i was always amazed by him. Im 42 now and still remember him.

Michael Gregston - June 22, 2020 at 08:00 PM

MB

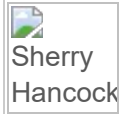
“ To the Richey family, my father was in the 2nd division and was one of the men who smuggled him on the boat. I would love to write you a letter and share memories that my dad had. Please email me. I have searched for you for years. Learned of his passing from the Indianhead publication that my dad subscribed to all these years. So sorry that he is gone. Mary Gann Butterfield

Mary Butterfield - October 08, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ please email me at marylgann@aol.com. I would love to write you a letter and share my dad's memories of Joe. My dad was in the 2nd division and was one of the men who helped smuggle him on the boat.

Mary Gann Butterfield - October 08, 2012 at 12:00 AM



Sherry Hancock

I sent you an email. My friend was also in 2nd Division. He is turning 100. Thought you could share your Dad and his memory with him for his birthday. You can contact me at icuincognito@gmail.com Sherry Hancock

Sherry Hancock - May 24, 2024 at 09:51 AM

GN

“ Dear Celeste and Regina... Sorry for your loss, but truly thankful for the memories your father's death kicked into gear for me. My mom, Patsy, so respected your father. I never had him as a teacher, or mentor, and neither of you and I were close, but my mom and dad spoke about your dad with such admiration from getting to know him from her store. My mom, as all women in that era, was very involved in WWII having 8 or 9 uncles who served, wanted to be sure I learned the lessons, as did my grandparents. I was of German descent (100% on my mother's side) and that added to the history, for sure. Bless your dad, he lived quite a life, and best of all, he was able to procreate and renew himself through you and yours. Lastly, some may think this is not the place, but I'm not sure why not... your dad's death brought up some names (including yours) that tickle me. Probably Gail Britton's as much as anyones. I hope you two and she are well. Bless your daddy.

Gayle Noe - September 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

RB

*“ Mrs Ritchey, Celeste & Regina,

My thoughts and prayers go out to you all during this time. He was truly a blessed and unique man, who overcame many obstacles in his lifetime. He will always be remembered and appreciated by any student who had the good fortune to be in one of his classes. God Bless you all.*

Rick Blankenship - August 29, 2012 at 12:00 AM

AH

“ Mrs. Ritchey, Celeste, and Regina.. I just learned of Mr. Ritchey's passing. My love and prayers are with you today.

Annie (Bucko) Horton - August 25, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BD

“ I really enjoyed having Mr. Ritchey as my woodwork teacher. I never made any works of art but I still learned a lot and had a blast learning everything. Had such a warm personality and great smile. Wonderful man!!

Bart Drennan - August 25, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ i don't think i can any thing more about mr ritchey that every one alrely knows about the man so sorry for your loss and for the loss to this town he will be missed by all

david boswell - August 09, 2012 at 12:00 AM

VW

“ our prayers and thoughts are with the Ritchey family. i thought the world of his parents and now i understand why. what an amazing life Mr. Ritchey led. Vance and Dee Ann Winningham

vance and dee ann winningham - August 08, 2012 at 12:00 AM

KM

“ I wished to have been there today to celebrate Joe's life with my Dad, Ken and my Mom, Anne. He was a very beloved member of the family; part of my parent's life beginning together, kind, understanding. Joe knew what it was like to live life and he will be missed.

Karen Earhart McCuistion - August 06, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GB

“ Dearest Ritchey family I'm so sorry for your loss. Mr Ritchey, your whole person always beamed with love and compassion for your family and your life; and that smile just made everything seem better!! You will be sorely missed by all who were lucky enough to have crossed your path.

Gail Britton Brown - August 06, 2012 at 12:00 AM

KW

“ Celeste, your dad sounds like he was a wonderful man as well as dad. So sorry for you and your family.

Kathy White - August 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JA

“ I went to college with him at East Central 1953-57.

John Anderson - August 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ We praise God for Joe Ritcheys life and the many lives that he touched.

Larry and Alva Charlson and family - August 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DA

“ Mr. Ritchey, what a great teacher and coach. I remember him very well from his teaching days at Madill when I was in Junior High and he was an assistant football coach and social studies teacher. What great stories he would tell of his childhood and his struggles. He left an indullable impression on his young students and we will remember him always. Rest in Peace Joe Ritchey, you will be missed.

Donnie Ayres - August 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JT

“ The whole town loved Joe he was a wonderful person and we are all so saddened by his death..God Bless Virginia and girls as they go thru these trying times..We love you all..Our prayers are with you and for you..

Jean Tivis-Price - August 04, 2012 at 12:00 AM

KS

“ Virginia, Celeste, and Regina, I am so sorry for your loss. Mr. Ritchey was a fine man and we all benefited from knowing him. God bless you all! Kathy Mihalhauser Sauers

Kathy Sauers - August 04, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SK

“ I was one of the first women to take wood shop and I was also an aide for him. We had so many good laughs together. He was serious when he needed to be but he also had time to talk to his students. He will always be an iconic memory for Lindsay.

Sherry (Perry) Kochert - August 03, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BD

“ Mr Ritchey was a great teacher and a great man. He stayed in great shape and loved his country. So long Mr. Ritchey

Brian Dacus - August 03, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ I had Mr Ritchey in shop at school and he recruited me for Army National Guards. Anytime I needed anything he was there. He will be deeply missed by all the lives he touched. My condolences to his family.

Jim Bray - August 03, 2012 at 12:00 AM

VB

“ I had difficulty understanding his accent, but I always liked him. I'll miss seeing him drive his classic car around town.

Vera Baker - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

TP

“ He was a Great Teacher Sgt, and Friend, I will miss our talks. RIP

Teresa Phelps - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

WR

“ We have a chopping block in our kitchen today that makes me think of Mr. Richey. His stories and Mechanical Drawing lessons come to mind frequently. Precious Memories

Wayne Roberson - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

FP

“ I would listen in on conversations he had with other teachers in the evening when they would be working out in the weight room. I never had him for classes, but he always had a smile and something nice to say whenever we passed. He was a great man. Very compassionate. RIP Mr. Joseph Ritchey.

Fred Patterson - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GB

“ I have some wonderful memories of this great man. My thoughts and prayers with the family.

Gaye Bray - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GF

“ To the Ritchie Family...What a great man Joe was! I had as much respect for Joe as any teacher that ever taught me. I too still use the tools today that he shared with me as a teacher. I have fond memories of Joe even after graduation, working with him in the old shop building during the Christmas season. He touched the lives of so many youngsters, and it's obvious by all the messages already being posted. May God give you peace during this time. Your pain is felt by many. Glen Fox

Glen Fox - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BF

“ Virginia and family, Another great teacher and supporter of Lindsay students has been called home. Joe was always such a dedicated man, to family, country and friends. I would see him run by my house and I would talk to him about the days when he and S.J. taught together. He was always so kindy grandkids always liked seeing him drive by in his car.

Betty Foster - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ Goodbye Mr Ritchey - you were a wonderful man, always a smile on your face and laughter from the heart. I enjoyed your drafting class also and seeing your drive by my parents house in your green car. You will be missed by many.

Barbara Burditt Beasley - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DN

“ Mr. Ritchey Was one of my teachers he was a great man. A man that carried a smile where ever he went. He taught me a lot! He will be missed. R.I.P. Mr. Ritchey.

Donnie Nunn - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

NA

“ Years ago I asked Mr. Ritchey if one of his classes would make me a bench. He told me no, but I could make it if I would come down to his last class of the day. It was quite an experience. He would not let me use power tools. The bench is still in use today and I wouldn't part with it. He was a very nice man and will be missed and remembered by so many. God's blessings to his family as they adjust to his absence.

Nancy Payne Adams - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SL

“ Ritchey family, very sorry for your loss. mr. ritchey was a husband & father to be very proud of, a great example to others.

steve Lauderdale - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

PT

“ I had the great pleasure of having Mr. Ritcher as Bus #4 driver. Although we Tucker Kids were the last one's off and it made for a long afternoon, never do I remember a harsh comment from him. As a band parent, he was always very supportive & Mr. Ritchey even held the honor of being my parent's neighbor. As he was running on Murray Hill, he would always smile & wave. Memories of such an awesome man will forver linger in my mind and in the halls of Lindsay High. May God bless you, Regina, Celiste, and Miss Virginia.

Pamm Tucker - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JY

“ Virginia, Regina, Celiste and the rest of the family... know that you guys are in our thoughts and prayers. We have missed living by Joe and Virginia.... We often talk about the fun times we had out on the back porch and Joe and John workin on the 55... If you guys need anything please call me.. We love you bunches.

John and Madonna Yandell - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SA

“ Mr. Ritchie was a great teacher and will be greatly missed. I hope his family will find comfort in knowing how great he was.

Steven Anderson - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ Mr. Richie, words cannot describe what a man that he was, I do not remember a time that he did not have a smile on his face and I use the skills that he taught us everyday. To the family my prayers are with you and he will always be remembered as a true friend.

Barry Blish - August 02, 2012 at 12:00 AM

RK

“ Enjoyed teaching with Joe....brought a lift to teachers as well as students. RIP

Rita Kopycinski - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ Great guy. I always thought a lot of him. He really cared about people, especially his students. My condolences to the family.

Joe Robison - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DA

“ *RIP Joe Ritchey! Great man who had compassion for people.
*

Dick Abram - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

KR

“ *Thank you Mr. Ritchey for the life lessons you taught me. You will be missed by the many you touched...Rest well*

Keith Roberts - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

LG

“ *He was always Mr. Ritchey to those who had him in school. I still use the skills most everyday that he taught in Wood Shop and in Mechanical Drawing. He stressed safety most of all and always wanted the best out of his students. He was always smiling he will be missed by all who knew him. When the class did well he would buy all of us a coke he called them pop-cola parties I will have one tomorrow for you Mr. Ritchey RIP. A good Man a good teacher and a good friend may The Lord comfort you all his family in this time of loss.*

Lester Grumbles - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ *He started telling me stories when I was old enough to understand at a young age(5). Back then I would ride with him and my dad to their military training on the weekends. I will remember those days forever. RIP*

Shane Mitchell - August 01, 2012 at 12:00 AM