



Charles Ray Sandidge, Jr.

November 6, 1930 - January 10, 2021

Charles Ray Sandidge, Jr.

November 6, 1930 - January 10, 2021

Entiat, Washington

Charles Ray Sandidge Jr. 90, an Entiat River Road resident for nearly 50 years, passed away peacefully at his home in Entiat on Sunday, January 10, 2021. Ray was born November 6, 1930, in Canton, Mississippi to the late Charles Ray Sr. and Mildred Martin Sandidge. He graduated from Canton High School and continued his education attending Hines Junior College. Ray met his wife Teresa Norris in high school where they were high school sweethearts. They married January 4, 1952, in Canton, Mississippi at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and have been married 69 years. They celebrated their 69th anniversary on January 4, 2021.

Ray received his private fixed wing pilots license at the age of 16 and became the youngest licensed pilot in history in the State of Mississippi. While attending college Ray served in the National Guard. With the outbreak of the Korean Conflict and the need for pilots, Ray was activated into the Army on May 20, 1953.

After entering the Army, he received additional training as a Fixed Wing Pilot, Advanced Helicopter Pilot, Amphibious Landing Craft Force Staff, Instrument

Flight Examiner and in Tactical Nuclear Weapons Deployment. He served in South Korea as Flight Intelligence Officer and was a Combat Helicopter Flight Commander during the Vietnam War.

While serving in the Army, Ray was honored by being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroic actions, Legion of Merit Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, twice awarded Army Commendation Medal, and four times awarded the Air Medal for heroic actions.

He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel on May 31, 1973. Ray and Teresa purchased their orchard property up the Entiat River Road and had continued to operate or lease the orchard until 2015. Ray and Teresa were blessed in April of 1986 with a mutation from one of their Red Delicious apple trees resulting in their own patented Super Chief Sandidge strain of a Red Delicious tree that was marketed around the world and is still being sold by nurseries in France, Serbia, Algeria and South Africa.

Ray, along with Barbara Harris and James Small and a few others started the Entiat Valley Credit Union, which became North Central Credit Union, and was eventually purchased by Spokane based Numerica Credit Union.

Ray was a past president of the Wenatchee Valley College Foundation and was instrumental with others to start the Wenatchee Valley College Tree Fruit Production program 2-year course and later to bring on the Hispanic First Aid Program. He was a volunteer firefighter for Entiat for 25 years as well as President of the Entiat Chamber of Commerce. He was known by his motto as the "Can Do" man by many who knew him. He never saw a challenge that couldn't be remedied by collective strong community involvement and drawing on the great leadership available in the Valley.

In the early 1990s, Ray was also one of primary members who developed and

eventually implemented the Entiat Watershed program. The Entiat River became the second river in Washington State to implement a plan that today is copied and developed throughout Washington State watersheds.

A long-distance runner since his days in the 1960s, another name for Ray was the Running Man as you would frequently see him running the Entiat River Road. He was honored to be one of the Torch Bearers' for the 1976 Olympics. He also participated in many of the greater Wenatchee Valley Fun and Apple Cup Runs.

Having a very strong and grounded Christian faith, Ray placed the Lord first in his life before anything else. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." - 2 Timothy 4:7

Ray is survived by his wife, Teresa N. Sandidge, Entiat; six children, Margaret Sandidge Sweeney (WA), Charles R. (Athena) Sandidge III (WA), Cathy C. (Nick) Sandidge Friend (WA), Michael H. Sandidge (WA), Deborah A. Sandidge (WA) and Robert L. (Rio) Sandidge (WA); one brother, Martin Sandidge (TX); eight grandchildren, Milena Sandidge (WA), Sabrina Sandidge (WA), Ira Cavin (WA), Ian Cavin (WA), Alex Cavin (WA), Joshua Sandinge (Sweden), Anique (Peter) Zimmer-Jung (WA), Arijanna Sandidge-Zimmer (WA), Caris Sandidge (WA), and one great grandchild Camden Cavin (WA). He was preceded in death by his parents Charles R. Sandidge, Sr. and Mildred Martin Sandidge and one sister, Mary Gene Chancey.

In lieu of flowers, if you'd like to make a donation to Ray's final community project, please make donations in his name to the Entiat Community Historical Society (ECHS) P. O. Box 284 Entiat, WA 98822 OR call 509-784-0939 for details on how to make a direct donation to the ECHS.