

Lester C. Baird, 85

Lester Charles Baird, 85, of Montezuma, died Saturday, March 6, 2004, at the Montezuma Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Montezuma.

His funeral service was Tuesday, March 9, at Watts Funeral Home, Montezuma, with Cary Van Kampen, Chaplain, Grinnell Regional Hospice, officiating, along with a service by members of Aztec Lodge No. 238 Knights of Pythias. Military grave side rites were performed by members of American Legion Post No. 169. Interment was at Jackson Township Cemetery, Montezuma. Watts Funeral Home of Montezuma was in charge of the arrangements.

Casket bearers were Mike Schlesselman, Troy Thompson, Eric Criswell, Brandon Baird, Pete Kiernan, Jim Finstad, Brad Hagen and Jason Knuth.

Honorary casket bearers were Keith Osborn, Joe Current, Eldon Snook, Mark Ewing, Marvin Ferneau, Marvin Ramsey and Arlo VanHoever.

Lester was born Feb. 9, 1919, at Montezuma, the son of Charles Franklin and Mary Elizabeth (Wright) Baird. He attended rural schools in Scott Township and graduated from Montezuma High School in 1937. He worked on farms and gas stations be-

fore his marriage with LaRetta Arlene Jacobs on March 30, 1941, in Missouri. Born to this union were seven children. On April 2, 1941, he was inducted into the Army. He served in the states and overseas in the European Theater during World War II. He was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant on Nov. 13, 1945. He returned to Montezuma where they raised their family and farmed until retiring in 1981. They moved to town and Lester took over the care of the Montezuma City Park for the next 16 years. He was a member of the Blakely-Stevens Post No. 169, V.F.W. Post No. 8876 and the Knights of Pythias, Aztec Lodge No. 238.

Survivors include his children, Bonnie (and Carl) Schlesselman of Deep River; Sheryl (and Terry) Thompson of Des Moines; Vicki (and Kim) Criswell of Albia; Charles (and Jan) Baird of Las Vegas; Kim (and Mando) Hernandez of Deming, N.M.; Randy Baird of Scotts Bluff, Neb.; and Carla Baird of Waukesha, Wis.; nine grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; three step-granddaughters; one step-great-granddaughter; and other relatives and friends.

A memorial in his name has been established for Montezuma City Parks.

MR - MARCH 10, 2004