



## CMSgt. Tillman Joe Rutledge USAF Ret

February 29, 1924 - October 25, 2014

TILLMAN JOE RUTLEDGE

FEBRUARY 29, 1924 ~ OCTOBER 25, 2014

CMSgt Tillman Joe Rutledge, USAF Ret. went to be with the Lord October 25, 2014, and the world became a smaller place on that day. He was born in Goodman, Texas, to Daniel Tillman Rutledge and Alvajoe Phillips who preceded him in death. He was also preceded in death by his beloved wife, Joyce Ann Rutledge, son, Tillman Joe "Rocky" Rutledge, Jr., and brother, Wayman Rutledge. He is survived by his children Debra Ronnie Welch, Brenda Joyce Ronnie Schuh, Robert Rutledge Suzzane, Daniel Renee Rutledge, numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, and a host of dear friends. He proudly served his country for 26 years in the United States Army Air Corps and United States Air Force, enlisting so young that he "exaggerated" his age in order to serve. During World War II he was captured in the Philippines and endured the rigors of the Bataan Death March; he was a POW by the age of 17 for over three years. Despite this haunting experience, Tillman returned and continued his proud military career until retirement at the highest enlisted rank of CMSgt. Tillman was the recipient of the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, four Purple Hearts, the POW Medal, and the Combat Infantry Badge. He followed his military experience with continued devotion to his country, volunteering at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland Air Force Base, and at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital since

its opening in 1973; he had over 41, 000 volunteer hours with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Tillman won the Disabled American Veterans National Volunteer of the Year Award in 1996, the American Hospital Association Award for Volunteer Excellence in 1997, was a recipient of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Outstanding Volunteer with Diamond Award, and most recently was chosen as the United Way San Antonio Unsung Hero in 2012. Tillman was a passionate patriot devoted to truthful reporting of the events during and surrounding the World War II Bataan Death March. He authored two books on his own experiences based on a diary he smuggled out of the POW camp as a POW and a historical accounting of government actions during that time. Tillman was adopted by many employees, volunteers, Veterans, and friends as a surrogate father and grandfather. He came into this world from a very small town but he left as a giant of a human being with an unparalleled legacy. Tillman had kindness in his heart, forgiveness for everything, an impish smile and a keen sense of humor, and a true sense of humility. The world was a better place because he was in it.

#### SERVICES

Visitation, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 29, 2014, Mission Park Funeral Chapels North. Chapel service, 2:00 p.m., Thursday, October 30, 2014, Mission Burial Park North, where he will be laid to rest. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the Polycystic Kidney Foundation or the Wounded Warrior Foundation in his memory.