



## John Baran, Deadeye

August 26, 1925 - February 19, 2019

96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

383rd Co HQ Radioman



John Baran passed to eternity on February 19, 2019 at home with his wife of 16 years by his side; after a life time devoted to the service, protection and education of others.

John was born August 26, 1925 in Gary, Indiana to Polish, Catholic immigrants, Peter Baran from Krakow, and wife Sophi, a first generation Polish American.

Survivors include his wife, Catherine Baran; daughters, Ila (Mike) Brady and Pam (Rob) Wendland; grandchildren, Ali Brady Noland, Brad Brady, Alex Wendland, and Ellie Wendland; great grandchildren, Willa Noland, Brady Noland, and Camden Brady; niece, Michele Baran; and nephews, Robert Baran, Jeffery Kurowski, and Randy Baran. He is predeceased by four brothers and one sister.

John first attended Parochial Pre-school in St. Andrews Catholic Church where he loved drawing horses at age 5. He transferred as a second grade youngster to West Pulaski High School in Gary, IN. Throughout his Junior and Senior year she ran to school each day, ran home for lunch, and back to school again. In the summers he ran on the Indiana Dunes on the shores of Lake Michigan.

He illustrated for his high school yearbooks. John excelled in football, basketball, and track and field. He was elected captain of his Tolleston Indiana High School Raiders and named best player in his senior year.

His dreams of pro football were shattered when he was drafted at the age of 18.

He wanted to become a pilot, which he passed all of the written tests but was rejected because of bad eyesight. So he was sent to Camp White in Jackson County, Oregon for Boot Camp. He trained 6 to 8 months in rifle orientation learning how to handle, clean, and shoot a M1 Rifle.

Assigned to the 96th Infantry Division he ultimately shipped to Hawaii for jungle training and then to the Philippines just in time to fight under General Douglas Mac Arthur's "Philippines Liberation Campaign" during the Battle of Leyte. That battle lasted from October through December 26, 1944. During that time John helped carry out two soldiers from the battle field, under fire, for which he was awarded the Bronze Star.

He later was shot in the hip severing the sciatic nerve, he spent nearly a year in a full body cast. Nearly fatal, he lost

consciousness where he was given his last rites from a priest but woke up in time to hear the chaplain. After that injury he received a Purple Heart leaving one leg paralyzed. On February 23, 1944 he was honorably discharged from the hospital as a 100% disabled combat wounded WWII Army Veteran.

John returned to Gary, Indiana and used his Veterans benefits to get a higher education. He commuted to The Chicago Academy of Arts for his initial arts training. Next he enrolled at Indiana University in

Evanston, Indiana and graduated in 1951 with a Bachelors of Art Degree majoring in Political Science. With his new found interest in politics, he returned to Gary to work for the Lake County Government as a county official in the police department and later became a Gary City Parks Department supervisor for two years.

He met his first wife, Willa Brown, and moved to Little Rock, AR. Being a Little Rock newcomer he had no luck finding a local political job. So he applied to the Little Rock School district, where he was immediately hired. In 1957 John brought his family to Hot Springs where he was offered a position teaching secondary art education at the Hot Springs Junior High School. John's tenure within the Hot Springs Central Junior High annex building was a hugely successful one. He ruled his expansive basement level art studio classes with an awe-inspiring, no-nonsense attitude over three decade in which very few students ever disrespected his authority. During his teaching career he was President of the Hot Springs Classroom Teachers Association; President of the Garland County Teachers Credit Union; President of the Arkansas Arts Education Association; President and Founder of the Hot Springs Arts Center and organizer of the Military Order of The Purple Heart in Hot Springs.

John designed and built a hillside contemporary brick home for his family which now included a second daughter, Pamela. He began building as the contractor in early June, he hired a foreman and crew. John, himself, worked hard and finished the house in December of 1960.

His marriage to Willa had ended in 1972. He later married Melinda Hickmon who was a 9 year member of Hot Springs High School District board of education, city director, vice Mayor, and Mayor. John served two terms on the Garland County Quorum Court. They helped found and fund the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival. They helped lead and financially supported Hot Springs bid for the acquisition of the original Arkansas School for Mathematics and Sciences. They led the founding and creation of the Hot Springs Hamasaki Sister City Program. John and Melinda's marriage came to an end in 1997.

Later on John met Catherine at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. They married September 14, 2003 and in the time they had with one another they shared each other's important values, unconditional love, and family. She enabled him to travel the world with her to see different countries while visiting all the important places still in John's memories. He appreciated her constant presence and total loyalty during their final years together. Their strong and stable marriage was the crown jewel in John's long life.

A Memorial Service will be held 11:00 AM Friday at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.