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Willis Walter "Bill" Marshall, age 92, of Okemos, died Thursday, June 9, 2011. He was born on June 15, 1919 in Yerington, Nevada. He grew up in Nevada and Oregon, and graduated from Yerington High School. While enrolled at Sacramento Junior College, where he was a member of the basketball team, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942. He was a member of the Army Air Corps, as a B-25 Pilot during World War II, seeing extensive action in the Asiatic Pacific Theatre, including 62 missions, 14 of which were categorized as low-level. He was awarded 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 5 Air Medals, and a Purple Heart, among his many commendations. One of his distinctions was for having the most single engine time for any B-25 pilot in the Pacific. He was respected by his men, who gave him the nickname "Momma", and many of them credit his piloting skills for their survival. At the end of the war, he was offered promotion to Major, but turned it down for the company officer grade bonus pay. This bonus was used to purchase a small music store in Lansing, which is now known as "Marshall Music". Bill met his future wife, Mary, who was serving as a cryptographer, while in Hawaii during the war. They were married on February 23, 1946, and were partners in life and in the Music Store until her death on July 14, 2005. Bill and Mary were dedicated to bringing music to the lives of people in the state of Michigan. They built their business to include 7 stores, and their band service team travels extensively across the state in support of instrumental music programs. Bill's later years were enriched by his dear friend, Doris Pozner. During his retirement, he also attended many of the reunions of the 820th Bombardment Squadron. Bill is survived by his three children - Susan (Bill Bowerman) of Central, South Carolina, Dan (Diane) of Williamston, and Christine (David Bowman) of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 10 grandchildren - Mary and John Bowerman, Brooke (Travis Kaats), Georgia, Madison, and Carolina Marshall, Charlotte, Karina, Carsten and Cade Marshall-Bowman, and one great grandchild, Landon Kaats. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary, and sister, June Quick. At Bill's request, a private memorial service will be held. The family asks that any memorials be made to the music or arts program of your choice, in Bill's memory. PurseFuneralHome.com

Adrian Chapel

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