With a life that spanned times of war and times of peace, times of plenty and times of want, Merle Gray was an extraordinary man to know and love. He was a true character who loved making sure that others enjoyed life just as much as he did. Merle was a devoted family man who wanted nothing more than being surrounded by the ones he loved most. He enjoyed the outdoors and was someone that kept busy throughout his life. A man of honor and strength, Merle faced whatever came his way head on. Deeply loved, he will be forever missed.

It was great to be an American during the decade that we commonly recall as the Roaring Twenties. Jazz music was hot, ballroom dancing was all the rage, and prosperity covered the nation. Amidst this was a time of great joy in the lives of James and Irene (Ulrich) Gray as they were eagerly awaiting the birth of their new baby as the beauty of June unfolded in Warren, Michigan. The big day finally arrived on June 25, 1924, when Merle Raymond drew his first breath, joining his older siblings, James and Robert. His sister Paula completed the family many years later. His father was a quality control manager for Ford in Dearborn while his mother had more than enough to keep her busy caring for her home and family.

Born and raised in the family home on Cadillac Street, Merle (also called "Bud" while growing up) was a typical young boy of his generation. Merle also went to school one day with his brother, but when he got tired of it he went home by himself without telling anyone. He regularly walked for miles to the streetcar on 8th Street to go visit family all on his own. As a teen and young adult, Merle began putting forth his strong work ethic that would follow him for the rest of his life. His first job was driving a beer truck and also as a water safety instructor. Merle volunteered with the Boy Scouts and YMCA. Although he had hopes of making a career as a plumber, he didn’t know a master plumber who could sponsor an apprenticeship. Merle did, however, become a master brick mason.

As a young man Merle was drafted into the military during WWII. He honorably served with the Marines. Merle spent time in the South Pacific as part of the 5th Division. When the 5th Division was wiped out, he then he then became a part of the 6th Division. Merle himself was injured and was awarded with a Purple Heart as a result. He was an important part of history and participated in the Task Force 31(TF-31) and the complete surrender of the Japanese Navy.

New and exciting changes were in store for Merle when he met the woman with whom he would share the best years of his life on a blind date to the movies. Her name was Beverly Taylor, and they met through his lifelong friend, Tony, who was seeing Beve’s friend Sallie. That date led to more dates, and it wasn’t long before the couple found themselves deeply in love. With a desire to establish a life together, Merle and Beve were married at the United Methodist Church in Royal Oak. Beve wore her sister’s wedding gown, and the newlyweds spent their honeymoon at the cottage at Little Long Lake in Hale, Michigan. Together they welcomed two children, James Taylor and Bedi Jean into their hearts and home.

There were so many things that Merle enjoyed through the years. He lived an active life throughout much of his journey as he enjoyed bowling, golfing, playing tennis and horseshoes. Merle also liked fishing, canoeing, camping, and doing things with the Boy Scouts. Square dancing was another favorite. Merle took memorable trips to Australia, which was one of the best times of his life. A family man through and through, he loved spending time with family. Merle looked forward to family gatherings and spending time with all of his aunts, uncles, and cousins. Most holidays, he played shuffleboard in the cement basement of his parents’ home. An animal lover, Merle once had a special Schnauzer who was named Bozo by their son, Jim. Although Beve wasn’t in favor of getting a dog, at least at first, she fell in love with the runt of the litter so home they went.

Some quotes you may have heard from Merle over the years he would jokingly say: “I may not always be right, but I am never wrong”, or if you asked him what you owed him he would state, “a dollar six eighty”, or how are you feeling, “with my fingers”.

All who knew Merle Gray would agree that there was no one quite like him. He was a lover of life and often told his wife he was just glad to be alive. In everything he did, Merle made the most of the days he was given. He was a genuine character who was deeply devoted to his family, and his love for them was easy to see. Although he will be forever missed, his family and friends will forever treasure their memories of him.

Merle Raymond Gray, passed away peacefully on Monday, August 7, 2017 at the age of 93. He is survived by his loving wife Beve; Sister Paula (Dave) Krogsrud; sister-in-law Betty Hall; brother-in-law Dick (Nancy) Taylor; sister-in-law Sue Taylor; Children: Jim (Nettie) Gray, Bedi Gray, and embraced daughter Terri (Rick) Shane; embraced grandchildren: Pang, Plai, Emily, and Lauren; many nieces, nephews, cousins, great and great-great-nieces and nephews. With special thanks to his niece Kit Gray.

Please visit Merle’s webpage at www.lifestorynet.com where you can read his life story, sign the guestbook and share a memory. In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to the D.A.V. and/or Rose Arbor Hospice.

