World War II veteran James Able remembered for his pride in U.S.

By Carl Kieke
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James "Jim" Able was one of thousands of servicemen who parachuted into France just before the invasion of Normandy during World War II.

It was a life-changing time for Able, who later suffered injuries that affected him for the rest of his life. His pride in his country, though, never wavered, said friends of the veteran who died Tuesday at age 87 at a local hospital.

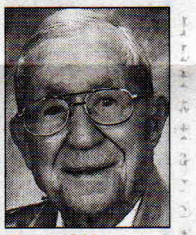


James Able in uniform

A service is set for 10 a.m. Friday at Elliott-Hamil Funeral Home Chapel of Memories, 542 Hickory St. Visitation will be 4 to 7 p.m. today at the funeral home.

Able died on Election Day, but he didn't miss voting in the presidential election because he cast his vote early.

"One of our friends said that Dad was a big part of history and he died on a historic day," said his son, Charles Able. "I think he would have appreciated that."



James Able

In a 2006 story in the Abilene Reporter-News, Jim Able recalled another historic event, the Normandy invasion. Able and other troops dropped into France to disrupt German communications, supplies and troop movements.

"It was frightening, but every man knew where he was going and what he was supposed to do," he told the newspaper.

After about a month of combat, Able was wounded by a German tank shell. He sustained eye and ear injuries that affected him the rest of his life.

Able was a proud American.

"I admired him because of being a veteran and for his outspokenness on his pride in America," said Parry Lee, who knew Able from a church prayer group. "Every opportunity he got, he wanted to be a spokesman for America."

Able also loved the great American pastime of baseball, especially if it involved young people.

"Dad's favorite things to do had to do with kids — youth groups, church, a baseball team," said Charles Able.

Jim Able coached Little League and Pony League in Abilene and Fort Worth for a number of years.

"If you were on his team, you got to play ball," Charles Able said. "If you earned a starting spot, fine. If you didn't but you were doing your best, he made sure you played."

Able also umpired. Charles Able recalled that in a Little League game, he called son Boyd out on strikes. Boyd turned and in exasperation, said, "Dad!"

Able's reply: "I'm not your dad, son. I'm the umpire."