

George E. Rich, Jr. '45 Bio  
Provided by George G. Rich, ΔΔ '74

My Dad, George E. Rich, Jr. was born June 14, 1922 in Hollywood, CA and lived in Pasadena, CA until 1933. His family moved to Marshall, MI in 1933 and then to Battle Creek, MI. He graduated from Battle Creek Central High School in 1941. While in high school he became an All-American Swimmer for the 150 yard Individual Medley. He also excelled in Track and Field, tying for first place in the Michigan State High School, high jump championship. He entered Purdue University in the fall of 1941 and was initiated into the Sigma Chi Class of 1945. He was majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

On June 24, 1943 he was inducted into the US Army. He served in the *12th Armored Division, 66th Armored Infantry Battalion, Company C*. On January 16, 1945 his Company was involved in a major battle outside of Herrlisheim, France. Many of his fellow soldiers were killed, while Dad played dead in the snow with others until late in the afternoon when the Germans came through and he was taken prisoner. He became a POW outside of Hanover, Germany until April 14, 1945 when British troops arrived and liberated them. Returning to the United States, he spent his time at a rehab center on Miami Beach and served as a lifeguard. He was discharged from the US Army on November 21, 1945.

He returned to Purdue and Sigma Chi to complete his Mechanical Engineering degree and graduated in 1949. He enjoyed living in the fraternity house at 202 Littleton Street and getting back to college life. He shared a story of a "Pinning Ceremony" that was a tradition back then. He met Mary Fran Dittrich, who later became my mother walking to class. She was living in the Kappa Alpha Theta house, which back then was next door on Littleton Street and adjacent to Beta Theta Pi Fraternity house. One evening my Dad and other members of the house went over to serenade my Mother at the "Theta" house. They had a song leader and sang the "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" and other songs. My Dad presented his Sigma Chi pin to Mary Fran Dittrich and she accepted! He said that it all worked out well! George has fond memories of going with Mary down to the "Triple XXX" for hamburgers and to "Harry's Chocolate Shop."

He also shared that he lived in the house with Hank Stram the football player who worked in the kitchen during school. He remembers one time when Hank went into the kitchen and got into some horse-play with another brother working in the kitchen, also a football player named Warren Ehrke '48 from Kalamazoo, MI who was a large tackle on Purdue's team. My Dad said that Hank came out of the kitchen after the tussle with his T-shirt ripped off! It was all in good fun, he said!

After graduation my Dad returned to Battle Creek, MI where he has worked and lived ever since and celebrated his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on June 14, 2023. He married Mary Frances Dittrich on April 29, 1950 in Indianapolis and they had two sons, myself and my younger brother Jim who also became a Sigma Chi at Central Michigan University, Class of 1977. Dad also has five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren which he admires and enjoys.

Dad worked as a Mechanical Engineer for Rich Manufacturing Corp and then completed his career with Clark Equipment Co. as a Project Installation Manager.

He has been a lifelong golfer after starting to caddy for his Dad at age 10. He became the Club Champion at the Battle Creek Country Club in 1956. He was a 2-handicap player at one point. He played 9-holes, 3 or 4 times last summer at age 100! He may get out again this year sometime, if the weather is right and the spirit moves him! He has a group of men that he has played golf with over the past 30 years or so that meet to play on most Tuesdays and Thursdays at local courses in the Battle Creek area. They also meet for lunch during the winter.

My mother passed away in 2004 and my Dad continues to live by himself with his good friend and companion "Puma" the cat! There is much more to this wonderful and humble man's life story,... which continues on to this day. I am blessed to be his son.

In hoc,

George

**George G. Rich, ΔΔ 74'**

Stratham, NH