

## The Class of 2011 Selects...

### Mr. Chester Aaron (Class of 1941)



Born in May 1923 in North Butler, Mr. Aaron lived a rich life of youthful adventure and family struggle in Depression-era Butler. Some of these experiences became the basis of his later literary offerings.

He graduated from Butler High School in 1941, but it was Pearl Harbor Day that propelled him into adult life as a soldier in World War II. The capstone of that experience was to find himself in Europe near the end of the war, and to be present and witness the liberation of the German concentration and extermination camp, Dachau. As an American Jew this was a time of considerable emotional trauma for the young soldier. With the end of fighting in Europe he was sent to California to prepare for the eventual invasion of Japan. But when the war suddenly ended he found himself far from Butler and thrust into a post high school world. For the next ten years Mr. Aaron worked in the health care field as an X-Ray Technician at a large San Francisco Bay-area hospital.

While in his thirties Mr. Aaron decided to further his education and launch his true vocation. He received a BA from the University of California –Berkley and an MA from San Francisco State University, which enabled him to pursue an honored career as a professor at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California. For over thirty years Mr. Aaron taught English and Creative Writing and he practiced what he tried to instill in others by becoming a prolific author. He has written over 19 books with his latest book published in the summer of 2009. His most well know works are Willa's Poppy, Lackawanna, and About Us the latter is about a Jewish family living in a coal town near Pittsburgh Pa during the 1930's. Most of his works were written after he was retired in 1997 and despite the fact his literary agents said he was "too old."

These books encompass the world of fiction and non-fiction, and many have been crafted for the young adult audience. His accolades include literary awards, a book for ABC Weekend Special movie transition, the translation of his tales into Dutch, German and French as well as his works being produced in audio form. Now nearly 90 he remains a prolific creative genius that is always working on the next big thing. Mr. Aaron is a prolific daily writer, and renowned garlic farmer. He is listed as one of the few true experts in garlic farming in the country and was mentioned on the March 22, 2009, Weekend Edition of the National Public Radio broadcast.

Again, the class of 2011 is proud to make Chester Aaron their selection for the 2011 Butler Senior High School Distinguished Graduate award.