

Robert Bruce Neal Obituary

b. 30 October 1923, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

d. 13 June 2004, Oak Ridge, Anderson Co., TN

Buried: Oak Ridge Memorial Park, Oak Ridge, Anderson Co., TN

Wife: Frances Elene Smellage

Parents: James Blackwell Neal & Laura Baker

ROBERT BRUCE NEAL: Retired from Martin Marietta

Robert Bruce Neal, 80 of Oak Ridge died Sunday, June 13, 2004 at Methodist Medical Center of Oak Ridge, due to complications following lung surgery.



Born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, he went to Lexington KY, to live as a child. He received his early education in the Lexington school system. After enrolling at the University of Kentucky, Mr. Neal was drafted into the U.S. Army. He was in the ASTP training program in Vermillion, SD. During the Battle of the Bulge, he was assigned as a replacement to the “Timberwolf” section of the 104th Infantry Division. After World War II, he completed his degree and graduate work at the University of Kentucky. It goes without saying he was a faithful and loyal fan of the “Big Blue” basketball team and was an avid fan of the University of Tennessee football team, his family said.

Mr. Neal retired from Martin Marietta Energy Systems after 41 years of service. He was a metallurgical engineer in the Barrier Development Division. His family said he was an avid reader and loved classical music. He was a reader for the Recording For The Blind and Dyslexic Inc., having read over 1,000 hours.

He was a faithful member of the First Baptist Church of Christ for over 50 years and was a deacon, chairman of music committees and held various other positions. He was a member of the Community Choir for a number of years.

According to his family, Mr. Neal was the last survivor of the James and Laura Baker Neal family. He had three older brothers, James B. Neal, William W. Neal and Jack S. Neal and a sister Frances.

Mr. Neal is survived by his wife of 50 years, Frances Smellage Neal; two sons, Bruce and wife, Nina Kondratich Neal, of Winer Springs, FL, and Doub and wife, Kenna Holland Neal, of Jamestown, NC; three grandchildren, David Neal, Blake Neal and Ali Neal.

His family said he was so proud of his sons and their accomplishments and he was affectionately nicknamed “Cracker” by his grandson, Blake.

The funeral will be at 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 15, 2004, at first Baptist Church with the Rev. Larry Dipboye and the Rev. Ray Lloyd officiating.

A graveside service will be at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 16, at Oak Ridge Memorial Park.

The family requests any memorials be made in the form of contributions to the Recording For The Blind and Dyslexic Inc., 205 Badger Ave., Oak Ridge, TN 37830; the American Lung Association, 212 S. Peters Road, Suite 106, Knoxville, TN 37923; or to a charity of the donor's choice.

The family will receive friends for 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the church.

Weatherford Mortuary is in charge of arrangements.

Short History

On a wintery mid-December day in 1944, three powerful German armies plunged into the semi-mountainous, heavily forested Ardennes region of eastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg. Their goal was to reach the sea, trap four allied armies, and impel a negotiated peace on the Western front.

Thinking the Ardennes was the least likely spot for a German offensive, American Staff Commanders chose to keep the line thin, so that the manpower might concentrate on offensives north and south of the Ardennes. The American line was thinly held by three divisions and a part of a fourth, while the fifth was making a local attack and a sixth was in reserve. Division sectors were more than double the width of normal, defensive fronts.

Even though the German Offensive achieved total surprise, nowhere did the American troops give ground without a fight. Within three days, the determined American stand and the arrival of powerful reinforcements insured that the ambitious German goal was far beyond reach.

In snow and sub-freezing temperatures the Germans fell short of their interim objective - that of reaching the sprawling Meuse River on the fringe of the Ardennes. All the Germans accomplished was to create a Bulge in the American line. In the process they expended irreplaceable men, tanks and material. Four weeks later, after grim fighting, with heavy losses on both the American and German sides, the Bulge ceased to exist.

Battle Action Credits: The 106th Infantry Division was credited with a holding action that used much of the precious time of the German Offensive. Time was an important and vital ingredient in Hitler's plan to break through to the Meuse River and then to go for Antwerp. The first three days of battle were vital and the 106th Infantry Division slowed

his advance in the St. Vith area. By doing so the 106th played a large role in the final defeat of the German Army. The delay and extended battle used so much of the precious resources of the German Army that they were never again able to recoup and fight the style of war they had in earlier days. This delay in time was a big key in the final downfall of the German plans for their *ARDENNES OFFENSIVE*. The loss of their resources, both human and equipment accelerated their final defeat and caused an early end to the long war in Europe.

On 16 December 1944, the day the battle started, I was a 19 year old Sergeant, heavy machine gun squad leader (30 cal water cooled) turning twenty on January 10, 1945.

The 106th Infantry Division, my division, was spread over a 21 mile front. Normally a division covers five miles. We received the initial thrust of the German counter-offensive. I was captured on 19 December, 1944. I spent four months as a Prisoner of War, walking over 525 miles, with a loss of 50 pounds of “fighting” body weight. I was only in a sheltered camp for one month and one week... **John Kline**.

***Frances (Smellage) Neal**: (Class of 1944, Baxter Seminary, Baxter, Putnam Co., TN). Story about her mother **Ota Theresa (Anderson) Smellage** (1904-1947) who md **John Barlow Smellage** (1900-1989). Source: pg. 134: “A Light on the Cumberland Plateau”, The Story of Baxter Seminary by Ruth Robinson Matthews.

My mother, Ota Anderson, was one of six graduates of the class of 1924. She was vice-president of her class and an honor graduate. She loved Baxter Seminary and was always proud to tell people where she had gone to high school. She passed this love and respect on to her five daughters. All the daughters graduated with honors and hold in high regard what Baxter Seminary stood for.

The poor farm students had a contact with the outside world through the outstanding teachers that were brought in to teach. Most of us did not even have a radio at the time and seldom had an opportunity to see a newspaper. A school teacher aunt received the Sunday paper and passed it around the community.

Baxter Seminary meant much in our lives as an educational, Religious, and social institution. I am proud I had the opportunity to be one of its students.

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