

Cecil Eugene "Gene" Dietz Obt.

b. 7 April 1925, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN – d. 16 May 2019, Nashville, Davidson Co., TN, (US Navy), md **Emogene Rockwell**, b. 9 March 1929 – d. 16 October 2017, Nashville, Davidson Co., TN, d/o **Harvey Dealer Rockwell** (1893-1989) & **Eunice Haslo Barnes** (1899-1986, both buried in Brotherton Cemetery, Brotherton, Putnam Co., TN. Cecil Eugene "Gene" Dietz, s/o **Henry "Harry" Denny Dietz** (1887-1980) & **Emma Jane Bilbrey** (1896-1985, both buried in Salem Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN. Henry "Harry" Denny Dietz, s/o **Samuel Milton Dietz** (1848-1920) & **Amanda Serena Lee Denney** (1868-1945), both buried in Cookeville City Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN.

NASHVILLE - Cecil Eugene "Gene" Dietz died peacefully at home May 16, 2019, after living an inspired and inspiring life. He is now reunited in heaven with his true love and wife of 71 years, Emogene Rockwell Dietz, who passed away in October 2017.

Together they had five children, the late Charles H. Dietz, C. Burton Dietz (Kathleen), Brenda Valiquette (John), Wallace (Wally) Dietz (Lee Lee), and the late Franz Dietz; four grandchildren, Aimee Valiquette Parks (Carson), Karen Valiquette Smith (Jarid), Scott Dietz (Britni Kramarz), and Kerry Dietz (Daniel Bacigalupi). Great-grandson Nikolas Parks brought a sparkle to his eye.



He was born in Cookeville, Tennessee, to the late Harry Denny and Emma Jane Bilbrey Dietz, and was brother to the late Charles, Paul, Walter, Horace, Edward, Kenneth Dietz, Bonnie Baker, and to Lex Dietz who survives. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews in Cookeville and Ohio and his beloved rescue cat "Blackie" who was his faithful companion.

Eugene Dietz lived a long and full life dedicated to his family, his work and the arts. Upon turning 18, he volunteered for the U.S. Navy and was stationed at Mare Island, then at the submarine fleet at Pearl Harbor. His first night home after his discharge in May 1946, his sister Bonnie "just happened" to invite her friend Emogene Rockwell to the house. Gene and Jean had their first date the next day and were married six weeks later on June 29, 1946. Their marriage

was based on mutual love and support and he honored his marriage vows to support her in sickness and in health for 71 years.



(Pictured: Cecil Eugene "Gene" Dietz, Class of 1950 Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN).

In 1950 he graduated from Tennessee Tech where he was editor-in chief of the top-ranked college newspaper and began his career as a journalist at The Nashville Tennessean as a cub reporter, later focusing on politics, Metro government and education. He covered and supported the civil rights movement, befriending the leaders of the sit-ins and ignoring death threats. He was named Education Editor where he was awarded the Tennessee School Bell Award and then elevated to City Editor. He also worked as a national on-camera reporter and producer for National Educational Television (NET) and for Newsweek magazine and Reuters News Service. He was editor of the Tennessee County Services magazine. His time as a journalist was in the legacy

days of The Tennessean, working closely with John Seigenthaler, Wallace Westfeldt, David Halberstam and many remarkable journalists. He covered speeches by President John Kennedy and Senator Robert Kennedy at Vanderbilt, and was the first journalist to have a nationally televised interview with Richard Nixon in 1966, as he returned to public view from his self-imposed exile to begin his run for the Presidency. He interviewed historian William L. Shirer and a leader of the Russian revolution, Alexander Kerensky. He served as an informal advisor to multiple elected officials.

After leaving The Tennessean, Gene worked as journalist in residence at George Peabody College where he convinced the publicity shy John T. Scopes to return to the classroom for the first time since his trial in

Dayton, Tennessee, to mark Tennessee's repeal of the infamous "Monkey Law." Next, he served as state director of the Tennessee Public Television network. After working a year in Washington D.C. as special advisor at the federal SBA, he finished his work career in Nashville as communications director for the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education.

Gene Dietz loved (loved!) music by Mozart and other classical composers. He created a documentary on Bashful Brother Oswald and came to befriend him and his music. He was a life-long student of history and literature, with a special love for Goethe and the poet William Wordsworth.

More than anything, Gene Dietz loved his family and believed God had blessed him in good times and bad. Thanksgiving and Christmas were always anticipated and celebrated with great love and sincerity at his home, a tradition that was honored to the end of his life. He was a member of West End Methodist Church where he served as a lay leader. He had a deep and abiding faith and great confidence in his life "forever in eternity." Eugene Dietz had a special and powerful life energy to encourage the best in people and will be greatly missed.

There will be a gathering of family and friends at Woodlawn-Roesch-Patton Funeral Home, Friday, May 24, from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. The graveside service will be private. Memorial contributions may be made to WPLN, the Nashville Humane Association or a charity of one's choice.

Woodlawn-Roesch-Patton Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements, 615-383-4754.

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*Read more about the Denny and Dietz families at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>