

Putnam's oldest veteran to celebrate 100th birthday

Putnam County, TN

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Saturday, January 4, 2020

Putnam County's oldest veteran **Lehman Riggs** will celebrate his 100th birthday Jan. 16 at 6 p.m. at the Leslie Town Centre.

A 100th birthday celebration for Mr. Lehman Riggs, Putnam County's oldest veteran, will be Thursday, Jan. 16 at 6 p.m. at the Leslie Town Center in Cookeville.



Riggs served as a machine gunner in the 2nd Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. After serving his country, he worked for the U.S. Postal Service before retiring and moving to Cookeville.

As the oldest member of the all-volunteer Veterans Honor Guard, Riggs has participated in ceremonies at more than 1,000 funerals, playing "Taps" for the deceased soldiers.

Riggs' birthday event is sponsored by the Veterans Honor Guard. Tickets are \$12 each, which includes the meal and are limited to the first 200 people due to space restrictions.

Tickets may be purchased until Jan. 8 by calling Jim McAfee at 931-516-3207 or by picking them up at the Putnam County Mayor's Office on the

bottom floor of the Courthouse.

A CENTURY OF SERVICE



*

Putnam County officials proclaim Lehman Riggs' birthday, Jan. 17, as "Lehman Riggs Day". County Mayor Randy Porter presents Riggs with the proclamation at his birthday party Thursday. By Paige Stanage: Herald Citizen, 16 January 2020.



The oldest Putnam County World War II veteran turns 100 years old today, Jan. 17. His family, friends and county officials celebrate with a birthday party Thursday evening at the Leslie Town Centre. By Paige Stanage: Herald Citizen, 16 January 2020.

Lehman R. Riggs Obt.

b. 17 January 1920, Pocahontas, Randolph Co., AR – d. 19 August 2021, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN, md **Lila M. (Waller) Riggs**, b. 20 August 1917 – d. 26 December 1996. Lehman Riggs also md **Ima Jean (Talley) Riggs**, b. 16 October 1930, Putnam Co., TN – d. 24 April 2021, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN, d/o **Simon Evin Talley** (1904-1975) & **Mary Lou Copeland** (1911-1999), all buried in Smyrna Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN. Lehman Riggs, s/o **Charles Ernest Riggs** (1892-1072) & **Eva A. Dawson** (1897-1985), both buried in Roseland Park Cemetery, Berkley, Oakland Co., MI. **Lehman R. Riggs** and **Lila M. Waller** are both buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, Lemay, St. Louis Co., MO.

Lehman Riggs, age 101 of Cookeville passed away Thursday, August 19, 2021 at Heritage Pointe Senior Living. He was a World War II Veteran and oldest living veteran in Putnam County. Lehman was born January 17, 1920 in Pocahontas, Arkansas to the late Charles Ernest Riggs and Eva Dawson Riggs.

He moved to Michigan to work in the automotive industry which supported the US military efforts during World War II. Lehman played a key role as a supervisor and had government deferment from active military service. After witnessing many of his friends with children going off to fight, he decided to forgo the deferment and enlist in the US Army. He saw seven months of combat mostly in Germany, and he participated in the Battle of the Bulge.

On April 19, 1945, Lehman and a fallen comrade were photographed while providing cover fire on the third story of a balcony in Leipzig, Germany. The photograph entitled The Last Man to Die was later published in Life magazine. Later Lehman returned to Leipzig in 2012 and 2016 and was honored by the town for his service.

Following the war, Lehman started a career with the US Postal Service. He retired in 1977 after 30 years of service.

Lehman was a member of the Veterans Honor Guard in Cookeville. He participated in over 1000 funeral military honors for veterans.

Lehman was a faithful Christian and an active member and Sunday School teacher at Stevens Street Baptist Church.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his first wife of 60 years: Lila Waller Riggs; second wife of 22 years: Jean Talley Riggs; sisters: Ernestine Riggs, Madeline Whiteaker, Eileen Dalton, Geneva Miller, Eva Lena Mitchner, Betty Jo Mullins, and Dorothy Bugbee; and brother: Charles Raymond Riggs.

He is survived by two brothers: Dwight Riggs of South Carolina and James Riggs of Florida.

Funeral services with military honors were held Monday August 23, 2021 at Stevens Street Baptist Church. Graveside services and interment were conducted Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

Ima Jean (Talley) Riggs Obt.

Ima Jean Riggs, age 90 of Cookeville passed away Saturday morning April 24, 2021 at her home. She was born October 16, 1930 in Putnam County to the late Simon Evin Talley and Mary Lou Copeland Talley.

Jean was baptized at the age of 12 at Bear Creek Baptist Church and was a current member of Stevens Street Baptist Church. She was retired from McCord-Winn in Cookeville.

She is survived by her husband of 22 years: Lehman Riggs; son: Larry D. West; daughter: Linda Smith all of Cookeville; grandchildren: Kevin (Tanya) West, Curtis West, Greg (Gail) Loftis, and Cheri (Travis) Choate; nine great grandchildren, and ten great-great grandchildren.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her first husband: Noble West; second husband: Grady Webb; sister: Jemmie Louise Lee and brother: Charles Aaron Talley.

Graveside services and interment were held Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at Smyrna Cemetery with Pastor Scott Parkison officiating.

Read more about the people & places in Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>