



Obituary

Died: Sunday, December 29, 2019

Julius Neal Watlington 12/25/1922 – 12/29/2019

Julius Neal Watlington passed away early Sunday morning at the age of 97 at his home in Yanceyville, North Carolina. Survivors are his wife of 67 years, Katherine Finch Watlington, his son, Stuart Neal Watlington, and his wife, Linda; his grandchildren, John S. Watlington and Katherine Watlington Johnson, and her husband, Kendall Johnson, and great grandchildren Hugo and Daria Johnson. Neal was also survived by his sisters, Jacksie Crossman, Sara Gunter, and Betty Watlington and by numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews, and many beloved cousins. Neal was predeceased by his father, Julius S. Watlington, his mother, Laura Jones Watlington, and three sisters, Nancy Bryant, Dorothy W. Stogner, and Helen Jean Watlington.

Service Summary

Funeral Service

1:00 PM Wed Jan 01, 2020

Yanceyville Presbyterian Church

North Street

Yanceyville, NC 27379

Visitation

2:00 PM to 3:00 PM, Wed Jan 01, 2020

Yanceyville Presbyterian Church

North Street

Yanceyville, NC 27379

Neal grew up in Caswell County, North Carolina and had a busy 97 years. He signed his first baseball contract when he was 18 years old, and then World War II broke out. He served honorably in the US Army, and as a Veteran, received the Purple Heart. He was also the recipient of the French Legion of Honor Award for Combat Veterans who had helped liberate France during World War II.

After the War, Neal returned to Yanceyville and went to work in the mill. In 1947 when he was almost 25 years old, he returned to baseball and signed with the Giants organization. He was the Most Valuable Player for the Danville Leafs in 1947, and the Knoxville Smokies in 1948. From there, in 1949, he moved up to the Jersey City Giants in Triple A baseball in the International League. He was subsequently traded to the Athletics organization, and stayed in the International League, with various organizations, for the next 10 years. However, in 1953, when Neal was playing for the Ottawa A's at age 30, the Philadelphia Athletics called him up to the Big Leagues for the second half of the season. After that season he went back to Triple A ball and completed his career from 1954 through 1958 with the Ottawa Athletics, the Richmond Vees, and the Rochester Redwings. During his off seasons, he and his wife, Katherine, ran a local Department Store in Yanceyville, "Watlington's on the Square", that they purchased in 1953. They remained in business there for approximately 50 years. When Neal was around 75 years of age, he decided to plant "a few fruit trees" in the back yard. Within two years, he had planted over 200 apple, peach, and pear trees, and that was one of his loves, tending to his orchard, until he was no longer able to work outside in his late eighties. Somehow, during Neal's very active early life, he also served as a tobacco auctioneer at Planter's Warehouse, and other warehouses in the area.

During his life he enjoyed baseball and hunting, working in the Store, tobacco farming and raising cattle. What he enjoyed most was his family and the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church. During his busy life, Neal was an Elder at the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, was a member and former President of the Yanceyville Rotary Club, serving in said Club for over 50 years. He coached American Legion baseball for a number of years in Yanceyville, and was instrumental with others, in founding the County League Baseball Program for Caswell County which operated for a number of years in the 60s, providing a semi-pro baseball opportunity for players and fans. Neal was very honored to have been inducted into the Danville Register and Bee Sports Hall of Fame a number of years ago.

Neal served as a Board Member for the Caswell County Chamber of Commerce, the local Wachovia Bank, and was an avid sponsor of youth sports activities in the County. Neal was a recipient of the Rotary Paul Harris Fellow Award and was a Charter Member of the V.F.W. Post 7316 in Caswell County, which was formed on May 21, 1946. Neal was also a member of the American Legion Post 89. Known as a humble and soft spoken leader in his beloved Caswell County, Neal was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother, and uncle to his beloved family. Always concerned about the future of America, the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, his family, and Caswell County, he was known throughout the area as a good man, and a true Gentleman. Known and loved for his humility, Neal always said that he “only had a cup of coffee in the Big Leagues”. However, he would go on to say that he “was never a great ball player himself, but he sure played against and with some of the greats”.

Funeral Services will be held 1:00 PM Wednesday, January 1, 2020 at Yanceyville Presbyterian Church by the Rev. Jim Davis. Interment will follow in the Church Cemetery. The family will receive friends after the Service in the Church Fellowship Hall and other times at the home.

The family would like to give special appreciation to Dr. Stephan H. Jannach, Cheryl Huskey, Laurie Overman, Brenda Irwin, Amy Woods, Alamance-Caswell Hospice and Caswell County EMS.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to the Caswell County Veterans Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 176, Yanceyville, NC 27379 or the Yanceyville Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 207, Yanceyville, NC 27379.

Harrelson Funeral Services of Yanceyville, NC is privileged to be serving the Watlington family.