



Rev. Elbert B. Jean, Sr., 89, of Bowling Green, KY passed away on Saturday, June 7, 2014 at his residence .

Visitation will be held at Hardy & Son Funeral Home, 3098 Louisville Road in Bowling Green on Wednesday, June 11, from 11:00 am. -1:00 p.m. A private interment will follow at Old Lebanon Cemetery in Lawrence County, AR.

From storming the beaches at Normandy to storming the pulpits of the South, Jean, ever a man ahead of his time, stood tall against the social injustices of segregation and poverty.

His efforts in WWII earned him 5 Bronze Stars for campaigns in Ardennes, Central Europe, Rhineland, Normandy and Northern France, as well as two stints as a POW.

After the war, Jean obtained an undergraduate degree at Hendrix College in Conway, AR and in 1951 was ordained in the Methodist Church after completing his education at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Named one of the most outstanding rural Methodist preachers at the 1953 North Texas General Conference, Jean went on to serve various pastorates in his home state of AR. It was while at St. Luke's in Little Rock, Jean gained national attention for being part of a small, but persistent group of clergy and laity that supported the Little Rock Nine and integration of the city's Central High School.

It was during that tumultuous period that Jean began a lifelong friendship with the late Rev. Will D. Campbell, who persuaded him to move to Nashville, TN to work with him first at the National Council of Churches' "Southern Project" and later at the Committee of Southern Churchmen, while simultaneously filling pastoral position at what was then Seay-Hubbard African Methodist Episcopal Church. Eventually, Jean "left the Church to enter the ministry" altogether, as described by Rev. Campbell in his book Brother to a Dragonfly and more recently in Gordon Oyer's Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest as he turned his attention to the War on Poverty.

From 1964 to 1968 Jean was named as the State of TN's first Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity under R. Sargent Shriver during President Lyndon Johnson's administration. Following his term with the OEO, Jean served as the Director of the TN Rural Concentrated Employment Program, which provided job skills training for the unemployed in the rural areas of the Upper Cumberland.

After the TNCEP program ended, Jean pursued private business interests until 1977 when Jean once again returned to Arkansas to serve as the Field Director of the First Congressional District in Jonesboro for Congressman Bill Alexander. While there, he became an early champion of alternative fuels as a way of protecting the Earth. After an automobile accident that compounded wartime injuries ended his public career, he returned to the private sector with his family in Tennessee.

In 1990 Jean settled in Bowling Green, KY, where he enjoyed pontificating while building furniture in his expansive woodworking shop, gardening and mowing his 24 acre "gentleman's farm" until suffering a stroke in late 2011.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Will M. and Ina Montgomery Jean, brothers Elton C. (Jean), William Ray (Maxine), sister Faye Arnold (Keith), all of Arkansas and son in law Ernest Cameron of Mt Juliet, TN.

Jean is survived by his wife Joy Jenkins Jean, children Lt. Col Bert Jean (Laura) of Warner Robins AFB, GA, Michael Jean (Karen) of Deer Park, WA, Patrick Jean (Barbara) of Raleigh, NC, Susan Jean of Bowling Green, KY, nephew Terry Jean (Kimberly) of Ozark, MO, stepdaughters Ruth Stafford (Joe) of Dixon Springs, TN, Lori Cameron of Mt Juliet, TN, Elizabeth James (Jesse) of Gallatin, TN, grandchildren Byron Jean III, Madeline Jean, Shelley Tuttle, Amy Powell, BJ Jones, LeaEllen Jones, Jessica Halliburton and 7 great grandchildren. He also leaves behind Rocket, the cat who faithfully stood watch during the final months of his illness along with numerous other rescued pets.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to Disabled American Veterans <http://www.dav.org/help-dav/> or to the Bowling Green/Warren County Animal Shelter <http://www.bgshelterpets.com/in-honor-or-in-memory.html>

Condolences may be left in the online guestbook at <http://memorialwebsites.legacy.com/ElbertBJeanSr/homepage.aspx>

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to son in law Jesse James, friends Kyle Carlock, Hope Lee, Cedric Fykes, Lisa Mellencamp and to Franklin Budd of the Disabled American Veterans in Nashville, TN.

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