



George Lee Hatcher, Jr.

October 14, 1920 - May 28, 2018

George L. Hatcher, Jr, age 97, peacefully went to be with his Lord and Savior on Memorial Day, May 28 at Noon at the VA Mountain Home CLC in Johnson City, Tennessee. He was born October 14, 1920 in Erwin to Fannie Lasure Hatcher and George Hatcher, Sr. He was preceded in death by his wife of 58 years, Virginia Bailey Hatcher who passed away in 2003 and his siblings Celeste, Edward, Robert, Alvin, Margie Hawkins, Wilma Huskins and Norma Ingle. He is survived by his brother David and sisters Suzy Hughes and Bette Frye. Also left to mourn his passing are his daughters Brenda Rudman and her husband Melvyn, Linda Sklar and her husband Benjamin, Beth Briggs and her husband Larry; five grandchildren and six great grandchildren and his beautiful, special friend, Charlotte Edwards. George Hatcher has held many titles over his 97 years. Husband, Father, Brother, Grandfather, Church Deacon, Railroad Engineer and fired the Clinchfield No. 1 Steam Engine and a World War II Prisoner of War. He was, in fact, a famed member of the Erwin Nine, a group of Army Air Corpsmen from Erwin who survived being prisoners of war after their aircraft had been shot down over Germany.

Staff Sergeant, George L. Hatcher, Jr. enlisted in the Military Air Corps on June 25, 1942 and on his fourth mission over the English Channel, was shot down on May 27, 1944 in his B-17 #4297460- the 'Delayed Lady.' in the 457th Bomb Group. He was captured by the German Army and spent 13 long months in Stalag Luft IV prison camp in Sagan, Germany before being liberated on April 29, 1945. Upon returning to the United States and seeing that beautiful Statue of Liberty as the sun rose in New York harbor, while eating as many Hershey chocolate bars as he possibly could on that Liberty ship that brought him home - he resumed his job at the Clinchfield railroad that had been held for him when he volunteered for the war effort.

He had a dream of being an Engineer on the Old Clinchfield Railroad. He called that Old No.1 "such a special little engine" and considered it an honor to be in the cab. George and his brother, Ed Hatcher, are synonymous with that Old No. 1 - And George knew every stop like the back of his capable hand. From Elk Horn City, Kentucky to Spartanburg, South Carolina, brothers George and Ed waved to folks along the way, shoveled that coal tirelessly and took such wonderful care of her, making sure she was on time and always

shiny and ready to climb those Tennessee and North Carolina mountain passes.

During his Railroad years and after retiring from the Railroad, George spent time with his family, fishing on Fontana Lake, exercising every single day and speaking to countless groups of adults, children, fellow soldiers, students and Rotary Clubs about his experiences as a Prisoner of War - seeing this as an opportunity to remind everyone the cost of keeping a dangerous dictator at bay and this Country safe as well as working through his own painful memories, one story at a time.

George Hatcher was also a wonderful Grandfather who gave his Grandchildren a quarter for helping him mow the lawn, taught them how to hold a fishing rod, loved to be constantly moving and when asked one morning how he was feeling he replied, "I woke up around 5:00 this morning, took my exercise, had some coffee and now I'm ready to punch the world in the face." He loved sweets, Westerns, the Tennessee Volunteers, his family, his friends, Erwin, his fellow Veterans, his Church and watching the graceful deer that sometimes make their way to the backyard for a nibble on his plants.

Here's to continuing to punch the world in the face every day by teaching us all to take on the day like he did.

The family respectfully requests the honor of your presence as we offer tribute and remember the life of George Lee Hatcher, Jr. in a funeral service to be held at 6:00 PM on Friday, June 1, 2018 in the auditorium at Unicoi County High School. Pastor Robert Bess will officiate. A visitation period to share memories and offer support to the family will begin at 3:00 PM and will continue until the hour of service on Friday in the Unicoi County High School Auditorium. A graveside committal service with Military Honors will be held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, June 2, 2018 in Evergreen Cemetery. Those attending are asked to meet at Valley Funeral Home by 10:15 AM on Saturday to go in procession. Active pallbearers will be Larry Norris and the Deacons and Elders of Love Chapel Christian Church. Honorary pallbearers will be the members of Rolling Thunder.

In lieu of flowers or plants, the family would like to ask that any and all donations be made to either option here: Love Chapel Christian Church, that he loved and respected, at 1421 Love Station Rd, Erwin, TN 37650, by calling 423-743-5321 or visiting www.lovechapelchristianchurch.com <<http://www.lovechapelchristianchurch.com>>. Or to the VA Mountain Nursing Home, where he and many other Veterans were treated with such reverence and respect. Donations can be sent to: James A Quillen VA Medical Center, Volunteer Service #135, Note: Nursing Home or As Needed, PO Box 4000, Mountain Home, TN 37684 or call direct 423-502-9047.

Condolences and memories may be shared with the family and viewed at www.valleyfuneralhome.net <<http://www.valleyfuneralhome.net>> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ValleyFuneralHomeErwin>. These arrangements are made especially for the family and friends of George Lee Hatcher, Jr. through Valley Funeral Home, 1085 N. Main Ave., Erwin, 423-743-9187.

Cemetery

Evergreen Cemetery

1100 7th Street

Erwin, TN, 37650

Events

JUN 1 Visitation 03:00PM - 06:00PM

1

Unicoi County High School Auditorium
US

JUN 1 Celebration of Life Service 06:00PM

1

Unicoi County High School Auditorium
US

JUN 2 Interment 11:00AM

2

Evergreen Cemetery
1100 7th Street, Erwin, TN, US, 37650

Comments



“ William T. Rohling lit a candle in memory of George Lee Hatcher, Jr.



William T. Rohling - June 02, 2018 at 12:00 PM



“ On behalf of my mother, I would like to offer our deepest sympathy in the passing of George. I really got to know George when he and Ed were running the ONE SPOT; I was one of the first "Car Marshalls"; I soon went into the military and served a year in Viet Nam then returned to Erwin, being hired on the Clinchfield as a Special Agent (police). Made several trips on the train. I, not long ago ran into George at the VA Hospital, still looking in good shape. Mom tells me that she knew most of the "Hatcher" family, growing up and living very near.

George held my respect and was a very fine man.

Go with God, George and may you rest in peace.

Mike Lukianoff
Mary Lennis Lukianoff

Mike & Mary Lukianoff - June 01, 2018 at 07:21 PM



“ My brother, Carroll Ross, informed me of the death of Mr. Hatcher. Neither of us knew him, but being raised by an X-POW who was also a radio operator on a B-17, a prisoner at Stalag 17 among other places, a Tennessean, and for a period of time a railroader with L & N, our family understands your grief and share in your gratitude for his service and sacrifice.

If you ever have the opportunity to hear a presentation by Tennessee Supreme Court Justice, Sharon Lee, please try to go. She shares experiences of POWs from Tennessee who had children who became Tennessee judges including her own father and ours.

May God bless all of you and may you be granted comfort and peace by the many good memories of Mr. Hatcher's life.

Glenda Ross
Knoxville, Tennessee

Glenda Ross - June 01, 2018 at 02:31 PM



“ Cassie Renfro lit a candle in memory of George Lee Hatcher, Jr.



Cassie Renfro - June 01, 2018 at 01:38 PM

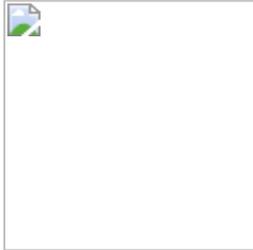


“ You will be forever in my heart. My life is richer because you were a part of it, so thankful I had to opportunity to get to know you. Donita Denton

Donita Denton - June 01, 2018 at 01:03 PM



“ 1 file added to the album George Hatcher, Jr. memories



Melinda - May 31, 2018 at 12:58 PM



“ 144 files added to the album LifeTributes



Valley Funeral Home - May 31, 2018 at 10:48 AM



“ Sara Sheffield lit a candle in memory of George Lee Hatcher, Jr.



Sara Sheffield - May 31, 2018 at 10:25 AM



“ I met Mr Hatcher several years ago at the American Legion Post #24 in Elizabethton, Tennessee and I am thankful for the opportunity to see him and to hear his powerful testimony about his World War II experience as Prisoner of War. Today, I am sad to hear about his passing on Memorial day and as American citizens, I am honored to say " Thank You" to Mr. Hatcher and all of the Veterans who fought and died in war and at peace. Because of Mr Hatcher and the World War II veterans destroyed Fascism/Nazis, Americans and myself live in the greatest nation in the world and I am not speaking German or Japanese today.

Staff Sgt. Sara Sheffield
American Post #24
Tennessee State Guard

Sara Sheffield - May 31, 2018 at 10:23 AM



“ I did not know George, but I was very moved when I read of his death. My father, James Hugh Ross, was also a radio operator on a B-17 Bomber. His plane was shot down in North Africa over Tunisia after completing their first bombing raid. My father then spent 28 months in Nazi POW camps. We can never adequately thank these courageous men for their service to our country.

May George R.I.P.

Carroll Ross
Circuit Court Judge, Retired
10th Judicial District

Carroll Ross - May 30, 2018 at 11:23 AM



“ "There was no one like George Hatcher. He will be missed so much, but he lived a wonderful life." -- Mark A. Stevens



Mark Stevens - May 30, 2018 at 09:10 AM



“ I had the honor to meet Mr Hatcher when he spoke to the men's class at Fishery Church several years back. He was a wonderful man to meet, a pillar of wisdom and strength. His experiences would have crushed the soul of any normal man but he was a wonderful man, he gave me a copy of his book and I will treasure it forever. God bless you sir and may your loved ones find peace in knowing someday we will walk and talk once more in Heaven in Gods grace.

charles pleasant - May 30, 2018 at 07:15 AM



“ George was such a great man in our community a Veteran and Railroad man. But most of all a Christian, from leading the pledge allegiance and participating in the Christmas program at the veterans park, and speaking at our bible school and most of all his friendship. I am so blessed to call him my friend, Proverbs 18:24 a man that hath friends must shew himself friendly and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. May God bless all of George's family and friends Craig Shelton Sweet Water Church Of GOD Flag Pond Tn.

Craig Shelton - May 29, 2018 at 11:51 PM



“ I will always remember our times of going to lunch together with you and Charlotte. Those will be times I cherish the most.



Doug Grissom - May 29, 2018 at 08:24 PM



“ It’s hard to find the words to express what a wonderful man, father ,grandfather and friend your precious father was.He will be missed by so many.May you all have peace and comfort knowing that he was welcomed home in the arms of our loving Savior .



Gary&Debbie McNabb - May 29, 2018 at 07:15 PM



“ Debbie Garland lit a candle in memory of George Lee Hatcher, Jr.



Debbie Garland - May 29, 2018 at 06:55 PM



“ Will miss you my friend. Thank you for your service. Love you

Doug - May 29, 2018 at 08:21 PM



“ Debbie Hovatter sent a virtual gift in memory of George Lee Hatcher, Jr.



Debbie Hovatter - May 29, 2018 at 06:04 PM



“ When I was a young reporter for the Johnson City Press, I met Mr. Hatcher and his brother Ed on the Santa Special. He let us young know-it-alls ride in the engine and blow the whistle, and then he would blow "Whip-poor-will" or other whistles, which we would try but fail to master. I remember he was very gracious and kind. I didn't know then about his incredible service to America and I couldn't therefore know what a great American he is, but I could tell from just a couple of meetings with him that I was in the presence of a very special man. I pray that God's great presence will bring you comfort in the following days. - Joe Ledford

Joe Ledford - May 29, 2018 at 04:39 PM



“ My fondest memories are of George in the Clinchfield Number 1. He always smiled and waved as he pulled the Number #1 out of Erwin. He was very dear to my father and grandfather. Kimberly Likens Lavin

Kimberly Likens Lavin - May 29, 2018 at 04:31 PM