



Press Release

OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENT

A Soldier's Journey Home

James Henry Lee

December 12, 1923 - July 2018

“Our Beloved Father, Father-in-Law, Grandfather, Cousin and Friend”

On December 12, 1923 James Henry Lee was born to the late James and Josie Ragland Lee in Altheimer, AR. James' was reared by his grandmother, Bell Ragland, due to his parents passing when he was a small boy. He was embraced with love and affection by his uncle, Roosevelt Ragland and many special cousins, including Joseph, George, the Roane Sisters, Juliette, Samantha, Vannie, Flossie, Ella Steen, Faye and their brother, Roscoe, and the Lee Brothers. He was known as “Baby James” by his babysitters, Roscoe and Dimple McCray, who told stories about his love to eat rice.

At the age of 14, James raised his age and followed his older cousin, Joseph “Little Joe,” into the United States Marine Corps. African American troops were not sent to the established training center, but to Camp Montford Point, North Carolina, a segregated base near Camp Lejeune also in North Carolina. The African American Marines who trained there between 1942 and 1949 helped pave the way to the modern Marine Corps. James served one tour of duty during World War II and was promoted to the rank of Corporal. In 1948, President Harry Truman signed an executive order mandating the desegregation of all branches of the military. In September 1949 Montford Point closed, and by June 1950, the Marine Corps was fully integrated.

Through the marriage to Syble Townsend, four children were born: Sharon, Janice, James Bernard and Michael.

James' career spanned 22 years and he was promoted from the rank of Corporal to Sergeant First Class-E7 quickly. Although James' military career was during a time of segregation, regardless of his service, he enjoyed and benefited by traveling across the United States and overseas, including Germany, Asia, the Philippine Islands, the Pacific, Korea and Vietnam. James was a warrior to his soul after serving in three major wars: World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War.



Most of James' training was in the area of Military Police. With great honor and dignity, James was presented the Bronze Star Medal-US Army, 1967-1968. When “despite many adversities, James performed his duties in an efficient manner with sound judgment and extensive knowledge in connection with military operations against hostile forces to contribute to the successful mission of the United States in the Republic of Vietnam.” James also received many other awards and medals during his military career: World War II Victory Medal; Korean Service Medal; Vietnam Service Medal; United Nations Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; Army of Occupation Medal National Defense Service Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal; Presidential Unit Citation; Honorable Service; Expert Badge & Rifle Bar; Sharpshooter Badge & Pistol Bar; Marksman Badge & Carbine Bar; Republic of Korea War Service and Freedom Team Salute Certification of Appreciation.

Following James' retirement from the military in 1968, he used his Military Police training to transition into civilian life as a security guard at Ft. Leavenworth Kansas Prison and the Pine Bluff Arsenal. After leaving the arsenal, James began his third career choice as an entrepreneur,

as an over the road truck driver. James owned his own truck and trailer, hauling freight across the country.

James' final retirement from work included: participating in civic and community affairs by supporting and successfully campaigning for local politicians; transporting friends to medical appointments, visiting air shows at the Jacksonville Air Force Base, fishing, gardening, tailgating in the “Grey Wolf” at UAPB football games, restoring a 1969 Volkswagen Beetle and hanging out at Melvin Geiger's Store. Above all, James enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his granddaughter, Tiffany, and great grandson, Keaton. James also, was the proud owner of “Monie Lee,” his sidekick and puppy that he trained and educated. Monie was his good friend. James “never met a stranger,” only friends he had not crossed paths with yet.

Through all of James' life ventures, the most important, was his acceptance of Jesus Christ. James was baptised at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church and later became a member of Old St. James Missionary Baptist Church.

James was preceded in death by his parents, brother, Clifton Lee, and his special cousins who served as his immediate family when he was a child. James leaves to mourn his courageous life three daughters; Ewania Hays of Milwaukee, WI; Sharon Lee Mitchel of Sherwood, AR; Janice Lee Willis of Birmingham, AL; three sons, James Bernard Lee (Shyrel) of Maumelle, AR; Michael Anthony Lee (Sonia) of Dallas, TX and Brian Keith Lee (Alanna) of Shawnee, KS; six grandchildren, Tiffany Lee-Franklin (Keith); Blair Lee (Talitha); Hunter Lee; Nathaniel Lee; Alexander Lee; and Shane Lee, and one great grandson, Keaton James Franklin.

It is foolish and wrong to mourn
the men who died. Rather we
Should thank God that such men lived.

George S. Patton