



Lt. Col. Varney Reed Nell USAF(Ret)

May 3, 1925 - May 4, 2017

Lieutenant Colonel Varney Reed Nell, USAF (Ret), died May 4, 2017, at his home in Falls Church, Virginia. He was born in Yakima, Washington, on May 3, 1925, to Clyde Smith and Grace (Reed) Nell. His parents owned and operated apple orchards in Summitville and the Lower Valley for fifteen years; they later managed the Roosevelt Hotel at 17½ N. Second St. in Yakima.

Nell attended and graduated from Yakima Senior High School. Following his graduation in 1943, he was drafted as an infantryman in the U.S. Army (USA) during World War II (WWII) where he fought in France, Germany, and Austria with the 71st Infantry Division; he was promoted to Sgt. (Tec 4).

After returning home in 1946, he married Shirley Ann Douglas. He attended the University of Washington in Seattle where he graduated in 1949 having majored in Far Eastern Studies that included the Chinese and Korean languages. He was accepted into the United States Air Force Officer Candidate School, and in 1950 he graduated there with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant and designated an Intelligence Officer.

Shirley, his wife, and daughter, April Jane, preceded him in death; he is survived by their son, Stephen Clyde, a granddaughter, Dawn Isaac (Donovan), and three great-grandsons, Jackson, Noah, and Finn.

In 1959, while serving in the USAF in Germany, he met and married Rose Marylyn Koch who was an American civilian working in Germany for USAF Intelligence. Rose Marylyn preceded him in death, and they are survived by a son, Edward Lenos (Christine) of Vienna, Virginia; a daughter Catharine Gail

Turnbull (David) of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and grandsons, Andrew Nell and Patrick Turnbull.

In 1986, he married Carolyn Joyce (Mansell) Banks of Salt Lake City, Utah. Together, with the blending of the two families, there are five step-children who loved and appreciated Nell: Stacie (Banks) Jentzsch (Robert) and April Banks of Midvale, Utah; and Joseph (Randolyn), Jason, and Jared Banks (Rachel), all of Independence, Missouri. Combined, Nell is survived by twenty-six grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his wife, Carolyn; a brother, Maynard Lenos Nell (Karen) of Beaverton, Oregon; and two nieces, Holly and Monique of Washington.

Nell enjoyed many professional and rich experiences in his life. He served in USAF Intelligence for twenty-seven years, retiring in 1978 as a Lieutenant Colonel. His military career spanned thirty-one years, including the USA and USAF. His military decorations included the Combat Infantry Badge, two Bronze Stars (one from the USA in WWII, and one from the USAF in Vietnam), three Meritorious Service Medals, USAF Commendation Medal, USA Outstanding Unit Medal with Combat Valor Device, Joint Services Commendation Medal, European-African-Middle East Medal with two major battle stars, WWII National Defense Victory Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, European Army of Occupation Medal, Vietnam Medal with four battle stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device, and Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm.

In his spare time, before and after retirement, Nell became an avid genealogist, and in 1982 he was elected the National Genealogical Society (NGS) President for two terms, and he was made a Fellow of the Society. He was largely responsible for relocating the Society from its long time location in Washington, D.C., to the historic Glebe House in Arlington, Virginia. His wife, Carolyn, is an Emeritus Accredited Genealogist and also served two terms as the NGS President. They were the only couple to each serve in this capacity. He was the founder of the National Genealogy Hall of Fame where he served as its chairman for eighteen years.

Nell was a member of the Ft. Myer Officer's Club Patton Hall; the National Genealogical Society; Harry S. Truman Masonic Lodge No. 649 in Naples, Italy; Scottish Rite (32nd Degree) of Alexandria, Virginia; and the Masonic Shrine, member-at-large. He was a member of the First Christian Church in Yakima from cradle roll until his death.

With courage and commitment to God, family, and country, he lived a full and accomplished life; his final resting place is Arlington National Cemetery where he was buried with full military honors on September 27, 2017.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA 22211
<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/>

Previous Events

Graveside Service

SEP 27 (ET)

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