

William Nelson Poe



Col. William Nelson Poe, USAR (ret.), 83, of 9 Marshall Court, died Nov. 28, 2004.

Born May 27, 1921, in Greenville, he was the son of the late Harry Tinker Poe Jr. and his wife, Julia May Swift Poe. He was married May 18, 1946, to Katherine Cureton Little, the daughter of the late Tollie Lee Little and his wife, Hugh Cureton Little.

Billy was educated in the Greenville city schools until his senior year in high school when his father worked in Washington for the federal government for a year. There he graduated from Chevy Chase High School. He attended Clemson College where he graduated with a degree in civil engineering in 1942.

He received his commission as a second lieutenant upon graduation and was assigned to the 403rd Engineers Battalion until July 1943 when he was transferred to the 238th Combat Engineers Battalion. He saw service in North Africa from Oran, Algeria, to Casablanca, Morocco, from November 1943 through January 1944. He took part in the invasion of Europe, landing on Utah Beach in Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, where he served as executive officer and operations officer when the senior officers failed to make the

landing. He was promoted to major a few weeks after his 23rd birthday. He supported the 2nd Armored Division in the St. Lo Breakthrough of July 26-31, 1944. He took part in the liberation of Paris and was later attached to the 1st Infantry Division in the capture of Aachen, Germany, during Oct. 2-21, 1944. As operations officer of the battle, he was responsible for the order to the artillery to protect Charlemagne's cathedral in Aachen from destruction by allied fire. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge during Dec. 21-25, 1944, and took part in the destruction of five enemy tanks. The night of Jan. 23-24, 1945, he took part in building two bridges over the Roer River under heavy enemy fire. The 238th bridged the Rhine River at Bonn on March 21, 1945. For his action in these battles, he was awarded the Bronze Star. Following the German surrender, Maj. Poe and the 238th went to Rheims, France, where he worked with Assembly Area Command until he returned to the United States in November 1945. Following the war, Col. Poe remained in the Army Reserves and completed his service as executive officer of the Charleston District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Billy worked for the Parker Sewer and Fire District for several years following the war and then went into business with Wendell Kelly as partners in Kelly-Poe Construction Co. In 1954, he joined the Gower Corp. and worked with that firm until his retirement in 2002. At Gower, he served as plant manager, comptroller, treasurer, and investment counselor. He was a lifelong member of Earle Street Baptist Church where he taught 13-year-old boys in Sunday School for 17 years. He also served many years as a deacon and trustee of the church. For many years, he was a member of the Bluefield Hunt Club of Jacksonboro. He was also a charter member of the St. Andrews Society of Upper South Carolina and a member of the Poinsett Club. The Poes particularly enjoyed trips to their mountain house at River Falls and their beach house at Pawleys Island.

Billy Poe is survived by his wife, Katie, and their children: William Nelson Poe Jr. and his wife, Cynthia Nicholson Poe, and their daughters, Harriet Chisolm Poe and Frances Cureton Poe of Greenville; Dr. Harry Lee Poe and his wife, Mary Anne Whitten Poe, and their daughters, Rebecca Whitten Poe and Mary Ellen Whitten Poe of Jackson, Tenn.; and Katherine Poe Thomason and her husband, George Thomason, and her daughter, Katherine Cureton Poe Ferguson of Spartanburg. Mr. Poe is also survived by his brother Frank Swift Poe of Greenville.

The family particularly wishes to thank St. Francis Hospital, the nurses, and staff on the 6th floor for their loving care.

Services will be conducted Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2004, at 10:30 a.m. at Earle Street Baptist Church.

Burial will be at Woodlawn Memorial Park following the services.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to Earle St. Baptist Church, 225 W. Earle St., Greenville, SC 29609.

The family is at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William N. Poe Jr., 117 Chisolm Trail in Greenville.

Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, Downtown is in charge of the services.