



Forest LaVerne Dennis

June 4, 1925 - June 27, 2016

After 91 good years, Forest LaVerne Dennis has passed on to be joined again with his beloved wife, Norma Lee, his daughter, Loretta Jean Stratton and many others who have preceded him. He was loved and will be deeply missed by his son and daughter-in-law, Forest Lee Dennis and his wife, Cheryl of Elgin, Texas along with his daughter and son-in-law, Judikay Aleene Cunningham and her husband, Shaun of San Antonio, Texas. His grandchildren are John Stratton of San Antonio, Texas, Justin Stratton of Austin, Texas, Derrik Dennis of Bastrop, Texas, Bekah Boys of Kingsburg, California, Zachary Lay of San Antonio, Texas and Shiloh Lay of San Antonio, Texas. He leaves behind five great-grandchildren and his brother-in-law, Dennis Ray Slazer of Alexandria, Virginia.

LaVerne, as his mother Myrtle Dennis called him and as many dear friends knew him for years, was born in Kiowa County near Cooperton, Oklahoma. He spent his infant and early toddler years on the Sears share croppers' farm there. He had vivid memories of those double silos that were the backdrop for the marriage of his sister, Leatha to John Groth. On his 80th birthday, his son took him on a return trip to Cooperton. There was very little left of the town but his memories and those two silos standing in the middle of a field.

As part of the greatest generation, LaVerne rarely talked about his 2 years 3 months and 27 days of service in the Pacific Theater of Operations during World War II. When he did tell stories about those years, he would talk of times in the wet foxholes and hearing enemy fire flying by just above head level. His division was in place in the Philippines some time before General MacArthur made his dramatic landing on Red Beach and declared the beginning of the citizens' liberation: "People of the Philippines, I have returned! By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil."

LaVerne was discharged from the Army on January 19, 1946 at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. At the time of his discharge, he held the rank of Sergeant. His decorations and citations include an Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two bronze service stars. He received the Philippine Liberation Medal with one bronze service star, a Good Conduct Medal, Victory Ribbon and three Overseas Service Bars.

When he returned from The War in January, 1946, he met Norma Lee Salazar at a church function. They quickly fell deeply in love and by May of 1946, they were married. The wedding was scheduled in the middle of a polio outbreak. Large crowds were not allowed to congregate, so their wedding ceremony was moved from their church to the San Antonio home of Zoie and Lee Salazar, Norma's parents.

After they married, LaVerne left the carpentry work he did with his father Tilmon Dennis and brothers, Monroe and Edwin. LaVerne followed the lead of his father-in-law, Lee Salazar and his brother-in-law Stanley Joe Slazer and began an apprenticeship as a printer and then became a journeyman, which led to his lifelong career. As he approached retirement from the printing trade at the San Antonio Express and News, he had worked in print news so long that people joked that he had black ink running through his veins. Throughout his career, most people who worked with him knew him only as Dennis.

Shortly after their second child was born, LaVerne took advantage of the G.I. Bill and purchased a new home on Trudell Drive. It was one of the first homes in a tract which was part of the Post World War II urban sprawl in San Antonio. Thanks to Norma Lee's uncle, Bobby Ginn who worked for the Southern Bell Company, they had one of the very first neighborhood telephones which stayed on the wall near the kitchen for the next 50 years.

LaVerne loved God and believed that at the core of his identity was his redemption by salvation provided through Jesus Christ. He and Norma Lee spent many years at Lakeview Baptist Church, University Park Baptist Church and North West Hills Baptist Church. At Lakeview, he taught junior boys Sunday School, served as Deacon and was a Trustee at Lakeview Baptist School, a private K through 6th grade school which was the first Baptist School accredited by the State of Texas. Many other churches used the school at Lakeview as their model for establishing their own schools. On his days off as Foreman at the American Printers Press and San Antonio Express and News, he and Norma Lee spent innumerable volunteer hours at the church print shop. They, along with the Gerry and Arvil Holt and Beth Ann Gulick developed, wrote, and published the Bible curriculum for Lakeview and a number of other church schools all over the country.

LaVerne and Norma Lee had a deep desire to share their faith in Christ with others. They would travel with Norma Lee's sister and brother-in-law, Pat and Travis Berlet. They enjoyed going to the Baptist Encampment at Glorietta, New Mexico. They participated in weekend revivals all over Texas. Their work with the Baptist Convention of Texas earned them the distinction of Missionary Ambassadors.

Following his retirement, people began to know LaVerne as Forest.

Forest and Norma Lee were inseparable. They loved life and took every opportunity to live it to its fullest. Family gatherings were always a fun event. Inevitably, a holiday meal at his Mama's home in San Antonio would wind up with beautiful harmonious Gospel songs around the old upright piano. He would sing with his sisters, Irene Petty and Aleene Thompson and brother-in-law Bill Thompson. Many others would join in. His kids remember all too well the five state marathon road trip that wound up at his sister's, Mary Lou and Paul Jolley's farm in Plainview, Texas. Inevitably, each Spring would include a road trip with the Thompsons seeing wild flowers in the rural areas around San Antonio. Forest and Norma Lee traveled to be near the birth of grandchildren and great grandchildren. They did not miss many graduations. One year they had to split up to attend graduations at two different ends of Texas. At 85, the highlight of their travels was a trip they took to tour the Holy Land.

Forest LaVerne Dennis passed away peacefully at that home on Trudell Drive where he built many wonderful memories for over 65 years.

SERVICES

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, June 29, 2016 from 6:00 – 8:00 Pm at Mission Park Funeral Chapels North. Graveside services will be held at 2:00 PM on Thursday, June 30, 2016 at San Fernando #3 Catholic Cemetery.