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Blanch Beam

Nov. 17, 1916 - Jan. 18, 2016

Mr. Blanch Beam, 99, of Grace Ridge Retirement Community, Morganton, NC died Monday, January 18, 2016. Born November 17, 1916 in New Madrid County, MO, he was a son of the late Joshua Claude and Alice Jones Beam. His early childhood was spent in Missouri, and when he was eight years old, he moved to Fallston, NC where he graduated from Fallston High School. In the late 1930's, he briefly attended Mars Hill College and soon enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving from 1936-1938 with the 29th Infantry Regiment in the Panama Canal Zone. Following his discharge from the Army, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1939 and was stationed aboard the light cruiser, USS Detroit (CL-8) which was docked at Ford Island opposite battleship row when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The Detroit was one of the few capital ships not seriously damaged or sunk. Later in World War II, Blanch served in the Pacific Theater aboard the USS Taluga (AO-62) which was struck by a kamikaze attack during the Battle of Okinawa. He achieved the rating of Chief Petty Officer while serving on board Taluga. After his discharge in 1945, he worked from 1946-7 as a civilian for the U.S. Army in Korea. Returning to the United States, he began his career with the Employment Security Commission in Missouri. In 1948 he moved back to North Carolina, and continued his Employment Security Commission career in Morganton and Raleigh. Blanch served as Chief Appeals Referee until his retirement in 1983. Following retirement, Blanch and Ethel traveled extensively in Europe and Africa as well as throughout the United States. They volunteered with the Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, as well as other service organizations, and were major benefactors to Lees-McRae College. Mr. Beam was a member and former Deacon of the First Baptist Church. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in

death by his wife of 52 years, Mary Ethel Boyd Beam; a brother, Forrest Beam; and a sister, Curtis Beam Funk.

Blanch lived a long life of honorable and dedicated service. It was punctuated by many important events: he was present at the inauguration of Herbert Hoover in 1929; his WWII naval service in the Pacific; he was present during the Japanese war crimes trials in Tokyo after the war and met General Douglas McArthur there. Blanch was devoted to his family, the Navy, his work, and his Christian faith – a modest man whose greatest joy was in serving others.

Surviving are his children, CAPT David C. Beam, USN (Ret) of Morganton, Mary Alice Beam Holland of Alpharetta, GA, and Olan Boyd Beam of Winston-Salem, NC; grandchildren, Thomas and Peter Beam, Matthew Holland and wife, Kristy, and David Holland. Blanch's family would like to convey their special thanks to the dedicated caregivers at Grace Ridge Retirement Community, particularly Ms. Shellie Smith.

The family will receive friends Friday, January 22, 2016 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center. The funeral will be held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, January 23, 2016 in the First Baptist Church Chapel with Dr. Thomas A. Bland, Jr. officiating. Burial will follow in Forest Hill Cemetery. Memorial gifts may be made to the First Baptist Church, P. O. Drawer 459, Morganton, NC 28680 or to the Development Office, Lees-McCrae College, P. O. Box 128, Banner Elk, NC 28604.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.