

Kenneth Nielsen, 86

Oct. 20, 1920 - May 12, 2007

HARLAN — Kenneth Eugene Nielsen was born Oct. 20, 1920, to Martin and Isabelle (Jensen) Nielsen in Avoca. He attended Pottawattamie County Country School, graduating from Harlan High School in 1938. He went on to attend the University of Iowa in Iowa City before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps Jan. 7, 1943.

Oct. 14, 1943 Kenneth married his high school sweetheart, Marie Evelyn Larson in Maryville, MO. Three children were born to this union, Lynda Kay, Ronald, and Debra. While in the Marine Corps, he was a pilot, flying Corsair planes with Squadron VMO-6 and served as an instrument flight instructor during World War II. After his discharge from the service, he worked as a pharmacist for Walgreens Drug Stores. They lived in the Chicago, IL area for 40 years. In 1952, he became an agent for State Farm Insurance where he remained until his retirement in 1986. During their time in Illinois, he was an instructor at Prairie State Junior College in Chicago Heights, IL, served as Charter President of Homewood-Flossmoor Kiwanis Club, and was active in St. Paul's Community Church while living in Homewood, IL. He was also a Little League umpire for many years. After selling his insurance business, they moved to a winter residence in Green Valley, AZ, and built a summer home on Lake Vermilion in Cook, MN, where they did all of the wiring and plumbing themselves. Ken also continued to fly his own plane. He became a resident of the Avoca Nursing and Rehab Center in January of 2005 and remained there until his death May 12, 2007 at age 86 years, six months, and 22 days.

Kenneth was preceded in death by his parents, Isabelle and Martin Nielsen, and his brother, Leo Nielsen. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Evelyn Nielsen of Harlan; his children, Lynda Kay (Robert) Karel of Sumter, SC; Ronald Nielsen (Christine) of Emory, TX; and Debra (John) Vance of Coleman, TX; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; his sisters, Darlene Blakely of Harlan, and Phyllis Yeager of Oregon; nieces, nephews and other relatives.

A Celebration of Life was held May 16, 2007, with Rev. Dave Swinton and Rev. Erik Lars Nielsen officiating at Pauley Jones Funeral Home. Honorary casket bearers were Ken's many family and friends and casket bearers were John Vance, Corey Rasmussen, Jennifer Vance, Robert Karel, Rev. Erik Lars Nielsen, and Ronald Nielsen. Military Rites were provided by Shelby County VFW Post No. 941 and Harlan American Legion Helmer Reyelt Post No. 150 at the Jacksonville Cemetery.

