

Dr. Thomas Nielsen

Alton | Wednesday, April 7 2010

Dr. Thomas W. Nielsen, Sr., surrounded by family, peacefully departed this earth on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 after a brief illness. The son of Thorwald Peter and Nettie (Fladlien) Nielsen, Thomas was born on August 15, 1922 in Chicago, Illinois.

He is survived by his loving wife of sixty-one years, Lorraine. Tom and Lorrie were married on January 30, 1949 in Chicago, Illinois after Tom served in WWII. He enlisted in the U.S. Army on October 2, 1942 and served as a Platoon Sergeant in Company C, 342nd Infantry, 86th "Blackhawk" Division during combat operations in France, Germany and Austria until the German surrender. He then served in the Philippines until being honorably discharged on April 22, 1946. He was awarded the American, the European-African-Middle Eastern, and Asiatic-Pacific Theater Service Medals, among other service awards.



Upon his return to the United States after the war, he resumed his studies at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana where he earned his B.S. in Zoology, a M. S. in Physiology, and a Ph.D in Physiology.

Dr. Nielsen began his scientific and academic career joining the faculty of the University of Colorado Medical School in Denver. He thereafter was appointed to the faculty of the University of North Dakota Medical School as a Hill Research Professor where he continued his research and taught at the medical school. In the early seventies, he was recruited by Southern Illinois University and appointed as a Professor at the School of Dental Medicine, which brought him and his family to Alton, Illinois. He finished his professional career at the National Institutes of Health where he worked for over a decade, retiring in 1989 as Chief of the Cardiac Functions Branch.

Over the years, Dr. Nielsen was a member of several professional, scientific and social associations, some of which include: the American Society of Nephrology, the International Society of Nephrology, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Society of Zoologists, the American Association of University Professors, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Physiological Society, the National Veterans of Foreign Wars Association, Sigma Xi Scientific Research Society, Zeta Psi Fraternity and SCORE. He served as an Elder of the First Presbyterian Church where he also enjoyed organizing and participating in events hosted by its Over Fifty-Five Club.

Over his many fruitful years, Dr. Nielsen developed a diverse mix of interests, including oil painting, fishing, music, Native American Indian art, biblical archeology, and collegiate and Rams football. Most of all, he enjoyed traveling and dancing with his wife, fishing with his son, spending time with his daughters and being thoroughly entertained by all of his grandchildren.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his four children, Dr. Mary Nielsen, Dr. Joanne Graham, Thomas W. Nielsen, Jr. and Lisa Nielsen; his daughters' spouses, Dr. James Shoemaker, Dr. Mike Graham and Michael Moehn; seven grandchildren, Kate, Laura and Joanna Shoemaker, Eric and Matthew Graham, and Patrick and Anna Moehn; his brother John B. Nielsen and Tom's niece, Kathleen Nielsen, who currently reside in La Mesa, California; and his nephews Dr. Mark Grauer of Baltimore, Maryland and Dr. John Grauer of Cleveland, Ohio.

Dr. Nielsen's memorial service will take place at First Presbyterian Church of Alton located on West Fourth and Alby Streets at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 15, 2010. The family is planning a private burial the following day at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorials be donated in Dr. Nielsen's honor to the First Presbyterian Church of Alton, P.O. Box 116, 62002 or<