

Leroy Heeren

Bethalto | Sunday, November 3 2013

With a Turkey Run State Park (Indiana) cap close at hand and a cat on his lap, Leroy W. Heeren, 89, died All Saints Sunday, Nov. 3, 2013, at his home in rural Bethalto.

He died in the home he was born in, a life-long wish.

Heeren, one day shy of his 90th birthday, was born Nov. 4, 1923, to Henry and Rebecca (Balsters) Heeren, Bethalto area dairy and grain farmers. They preceded him in death.

Also preceding him in death were a brother, Elmer, of Bethalto, a sister and brother-in-law, Esther and Ed DeWerff of Moro, a nephew, Robert Helmkamp of Greenville, and numerous relatives by marriage.

Heeren married Charlotte E. Plegge of Bethalto on April 16, 1950, and the couple had one daughter, Mary L. Heeren, 58, of Breese. Both survive.

Before and after their marriage, the couple enjoyed the Big Band Music of that era, making many trips to Clarinda, Iowa, for the Glenn Miller Festival. He especially enjoyed train travel, crossing the United States many times, as well as car trips.

He was always ready to return home, however. Two of his favorite expressions were: “Well, let’s rattle off,” and “Are you ready to head ‘er for the barn?”

Heeren graduated from Bethalto High School and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, serving four years in the Pacific with a Marine Air Group. He was a proud veteran who downplayed his years of service and later, he and Charlotte enjoyed attending many of his MAG-SCAT reunions at various locations, including San Diego where he completed boot camp. He was also a Bethalto American Legion member.



Heeren was baptized, confirmed and married at Zion Lutheran Church in Bethalto where he was the last survivor of a group of 26 men who served and returned from World War II. He was also on the church dart ball team and a font of information on early church history, recalling, for example, when the bell was hung in the “new” church built in the late 1950s.

On returning from World War II and on the death of his father, he took up farming and dairying on the home place. Later, he accepted a position at Cope Plastics in Godfrey, utilizing skills he acquired during his military service. On his retirement from Cope, he joined the Homer Henke Auction service in Moro.

Visitation is scheduled from 3 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, at Elias, Kallal & Schaaf Funeral Home of Bethalto.

Visitation will be from 9:30 am until services 10:30 am at Zion Lutheran Church in Bethalto.

Burial will follow with military honors will follow at Zion’s cemetery.

Memorials have been designated to the church Landscaping Fund or to the donor’s choice.

He will be deeply missed by two special cousins, Edward Heeren of California and Alvin Smith of Alabama, and a close friend of daughter Mary, Don Halbe of Cottage Hills. He will also be greatly missed by many nieces and nephews, great- and great-great nieces and nephews, cousins and friends by whom he was much loved. The door was always open for anyone who wanted to stop by and share a cup of coffee, have a peanut cluster or a cookie.

Online condolences and guestbook may be found at www.eliascallalandschaaf.com