

Obituary for Ralph Grant Van Orsdol 96th Infantry Division 383rd Regiment Co I



Ralph Grant Van Orsdol was born south of Bristow, Oklahoma, on July 2nd, 1919, to Fred Grant and Nettie Van Orsdol. He was the fifth of seven children and the last of that intelligent, witty and talented group to pass away. He died peacefully at home with his family on August 30th, 2003. His lineage extends back to one of modern America's founding families, having arrived in New Amsterdam (now New York City) in 1653. He is survived by his loving wife Dorothy and his son Fred Grant, his grandsons Aaron Grant and Jason, one great grandson, Ethan Grant, a stepson Larry Malone, a stepdaughter Judy Malone-Stein and many other family members and friends that will miss him greatly.

Grant moved with his family from the farm south of Bristow to western Oklahoma when he was starting the sixth grade. He lived the Great Depression in Western Oklahoma during the 1930's. He eventually graduated from Port High School near Sentinel, Oklahoma, in 1938 and enjoyed attending reunions with his friends from those days as long as he was able. After graduating, he eventually moved to Connecticut and worked for General Electric, welding television chassis when they were still top secret.

During World War II, he served in the 96th Infantry Division (the Deadeyes), Company I of the 382nd Regiment, from 1942 into late 1945. He attended many reunions of the 96th and appreciated the opportunity to visit with his brothers-in-arms. He was part of the invasion and liberation of the Philippine Islands on Leyte and the conquest of Okinawa. He was wounded in the leg by a shell fragment in Okinawa and was one of only three original members of his company still in the battle that far into the war. He recovered from his wound on Saipan, then eventually served as a Motor Pool Sergeant at Schofield Barracks before returning to the States and separating to civilian life. He experienced horrors he would not fully share, but after many years had passed, he also did relate many stories of courage, cowardice, victory, hunger, death and patriotism.

Following the war, he married Nelda Rhoades in January 1946. They soon moved to Longview, Texas, where he found work as a welder, and later as a machinist after attending night school at Kilgore College. He was greatly respected for his skill in both fields and he trained or worked with many men that became his lifelong friends. His son, Fred Grant, was born in December, 1946, and Fred honors his father as a man of integrity, strength and good humor. Like so many others, he saw his father as a six foot six John Wayne in the flesh – not just a silver screen hero. Nelda was deceased in 1970 after spending 24 years with a husband who honored and cared for her. She loved him very much.

Grant had a very special relationship with all his family and a most unique one with his niece Sheila and her children. During the years Sheila's children were growing up, he was the man in their life. They honor him like a father to this day.

Grant believed in God and in Jesus Christ. He loved to fish, to travel, to create useful and/or artistic items from steel and to spend time with family and friends. He had the greatest respect

for his father and was at his side when he died. He drowned when he was two, but revived as his brother Glen ran to the house with him on his shoulder. When he was in his teens, he had a ruptured appendix and would have died if a nurse had not ordered the doctor to try to revive him a third time. He loved to fly. He loved watermelons - especially his Dad's. His home projects ranged from small clocks to trailers of several types and 30 foot pontoon boats. He was honest and caring. Everyone will miss his humor and his smile. He had seen each of the United States and he loved his country. He missed riding motorcycles, but never owned one after his son was born. He stopped smoking cigarettes when his three-year-old son asked him to. He loved the sound of bagpipes. He will not miss plows or mules.