



(Ret.) Sgt. George Flavious Mills

May 23, 1921 - April 24, 2022

Retired U.S. Army Sgt. George Flavious Mills, a lifelong Decatur resident, a World War II veteran and prisoner of war, and a tireless community volunteer, died shortly after midnight today April 24, 2022. He was 100.

The man's legacy is not just his military service, but his decades of service for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and the time he spent mentoring children and JROTC cadets, said retired Lt. Col. Michael Snyder, JROTC senior army instructor at Decatur High School and a close friend of Mills.

"If George Mills were to pick a day of the week where he would pass away, it would be a Sunday — a beautiful, sunny day like today with flowers and springtime and positivity blooming and glowing. He would choose a day like today," Snyder said.

"God honored his wishes in how he completed his mission here on Earth. Now he's celebrating in celestial places with loved ones and comrades and the King of Kings."

Mills, who would have turned 101 on May 23, was born in Spencer, Tennessee, but moved to Decatur with his family as a young child. He graduated from Riverside High School, which later became Decatur High, in 1939 and enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 1942. He served in Company E, 109th Infantry, 28th Division and fought in the Battle of Normandy and Battle of the Bulge among other conflicts under the leadership of Gen. Omar Bradley.

It was at the Battle of the Bulge, which began Dec. 16, 1944, that Mills was

captured.

In a 2019 interview with The Decatur Daily, Mills said his company was in a large house in Furhun, Luxembourg, near the German border, when on Dec. 17, 1944, the 17th Panzer Division of German tanks started fighting the 200-plus American infantrymen. He said the Allies were out-manned and running low on supplies.

The next night, shrapnel from a German bazooka came through an open window and hit Mills above his right eye. "They used a flame-thrower and the house started burning," he said. "We had about six rounds of ammo left, and the captain told us to surrender."

He said he waved a little white flag out of the door. Nazi soldiers then forced the men, with no food, on a five-month march to the Czechoslovakian border. Mills said the prisoners stole sugar beets and rutabagas from farms along the way. "I lost 70 pounds," he said. "Many American soldiers didn't make it. They died of starvation or disease or from the cold."

American soldiers liberated Mills and the other survivors on April 13, 1945.

On that day, which would have been his 117th in captivity, Mills heard a noise in the distance that sounded like a tank. He and several other prisoners walked to the winding, dirt road and peered through the woods.

Occasionally, a vehicle would come into sight rounding a curve and Mills could glimpse parts of it through the trees.

"We couldn't tell whether it was German or American until it turned where we could see the star on it," he said in a 2020 interview with The Daily.

By the time Mills returned to the main group of prisoners, the guards had been relieved of their weapons by their former captives.

Less than a month later, on May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered.

Mills said he did not consider himself to be a hero.

"I was just one of 16 million who went over there to do a job," he said. "To get rid of a machine that was trying to corrupt the world. I know what those who sacrificed went through. They wanted to come home as bad as I did. They didn't get the chance."

After leaving the service he met his wife, Charles "Charlie" McDoura. They were married 66 years before her death in 2015.

Mills worked for nearly 30 years as a piano salesman, most with Traylor Music Co. in Huntsville.

Over the years Mills participated in numerous local organizations, including Rising Sun Masonic Lodge No. 29, Shriners, and American Legion Post 15. He was a founder of the Finis J. Self Chapter 2212 Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Mills for decades volunteered for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief as a head cook, preparing free meals for those displaced by hurricanes and tornadoes. He served meals to hundreds of people affected by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi in 2005.

Snyder said he became especially close to Mills in the last decade. After Mills' wife died, Mills routinely had Sunday dinner at the Snyder home.

"He was a great American who loved God, loved people, loved his nation and loved his community," Snyder said. "He loved mentoring youth and recognizing their leadership potential. He would try to inspire them to love their country and be good citizens in their communities."

Mills was a featured guest at numerous awards programs, including at elementary schools, and Snyder said he always took the time to connect with the students.

"He (wanted them to) understand history and learn from it so they could do tomorrow's work without having to repeat it," Snyder said.

"He pinned awards on hundreds of cadets at the university and high school level. When he'd come visit cadets it was more than pinning on awards. He was sharing and talking with them. ... He gave freely of his time. He'd spend all day with them. His life has been an inspiration."

Mills took great pride in Decatur.

"He told me a story once," Snyder recalled. "They took a merchant marine ship going from the United States to England as part of the Allied force. The

ship he was on, he saw it had been refurbished in Decatur, Alabama. He said he'd take all his mates down and say, 'This is a good ship.' He'd point to the plaque that was on the boiler room or wherever it was and say, 'Look, this is a good ship. It was refurbished in Ingalls Harbor.' He was very proud to be from Decatur."

Mills was hospitalized in early March after a fall. He was released from the hospital to NHC HealthCare in Moulton about two weeks ago, Snyder said, and died there.

"I describe him as the last true Southern gentlemen and one of Decatur's favorite sons," Snyder said.

Funeral will be Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 2:00pm at Shelton Funeral Home Chapel. Visitation will be Thursday, from 12pm-2pm at the funeral home. Burial with Military Honors will be in Roselawn Cemetery.

Cemetery Details

Roselawn Cemetery

Memorial Drive
Decatur, AL 35601

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 28. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Shelton Funeral Home Chapel
2105 Beltline Road SW
Decatur, AL 35601

Funeral Service

APR 28. 2:00 PM (CT)

Shelton Funeral Home
2105 Beltline Road SW
Decatur, AL 35601
(256) 353-1620
<https://www.sheltonfuneralhome.net/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of (Ret.) Sgt. George Flavious Mills.*



April 27, 2022 at 03:08 PM



“ *Summer's Light Bouquet was purchased for the family of (Ret.) Sgt. George Flavious Mills.*



April 27, 2022 at 10:48 AM



“ *I met Mr. Mills several times through his continuing involvement with various ROTC/JROTC programs. He was a genuinely good man who was a hero to our Country. He served with honor under some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. I feel privileged and honored to have known him. Rest easy, Mr. Mills.*

Barry Simpson - April 27, 2022 at 09:55 AM



“ *Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of (Ret.) Sgt. George Flavious Mills.*



April 27, 2022 at 08:03 AM

LC

“ George was a loving, kind and generous man. He & wife Charlie last visited with us at a family reunion here in Ohio several years ago. George's mother was our dad's sister. A lot of memories come to mind. God has blessed George with a wonderful life. We extend our sympathies to his family and special friends who looked after him these last several years. May God's blessings be with you all. Cousins, Louise Coots, Eola "Tootie" Snyder & Cheryl Wilson.



Louise Coots - April 26, 2022 at 12:34 PM

MB

“ I remember going with my church to help after Hurricane Katrina hit the LA-MS coastline in the summer of 2005. It was hot and humid and horrible aftermath for survivors and volunteers. We all gathered for dinner the first night as a combined group of about 300 people. Guess who was behind the counter with his white chefs apron and his US Army hat serving up what he had helped prepare? Yep, my Uncle George smiling and making people feel better after a super hard day. He was always first to serve and last to leave.

Michael Brock - April 25, 2022 at 07:41 PM

BM

“ I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Mills at Southside Baptist Church several years ago and was amazed by his life stories of his military years and listened to him speak a few times after that. I never got tired of hearing him speak of being held captive and anything military. Mr. Mills was truly My Hero!! Rest in Peace My Hero, your work here is done. God Bless the USA 🇺🇸

Beverly Moore - April 25, 2022 at 07:15 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of (Ret.) Sgt. George Flavious Mills.*



April 25, 2022 at 06:29 PM



“ *The Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum sends condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Sgt Mills. Rest in Peace.*

Lisa Keith-Lucas - April 25, 2022 at 04:23 PM