



## Leonard Otis Payne

April 8, 2014

Leonard Otis Payne, 94 years, 7 months, 8 days passed away on April 8, 2014 in Gainesville, Florida. He was born in Tampa, Florida, July 24, 1919. Leonard was the youngest son of Floyd Calvin 'FC' and Edith Morey. His parents, five brothers and two sisters had just moved back from the Isle of Pines, West Indies to Tampa when Leonard was born. After living in Tampa for several years the family moved to Sebring, Florida where Leonard's Dad a Farmer grew citrus, and raised cattle and chickens. In stories told, Leonard recalled as a bare foot teenager running cattle across what is now US highway 27 through Sebring.

After graduating from Sebring High School in 1938 he received a full scholarship to the "boys school" University of Florida. During school breaks he would hitch hike back to Sebring wearing the bright colored UF "rat cap" bennie which signaled to drivers he was a student at UF in need of a lift. If he was unable to catch a ride all the way to Sebring he would shelter in a citrus grove, sleeping in a grapefruit tree until day break when he continued his journey home. He, like many young men at the time, was on the porch of his boarding house listening as the radio announced the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. This event preceded the US entry into WWII. The next week Leonard enlisted in the Army Air Corp and trained as an aerial gunner. Flying in B24s, his responsibility was the 50 cal. machine gun in the nose garret of the plane. On 6 June 1944, "D Day", the invasion of Normandy,

France, he and the rest of his B24 crew were circling around the English Air Field waiting the call to move forward. He recalls being surrounded by planes on all sides and seeing the battleship Texas below from his nose garret view.

Amazingly, he flew 35 missions without injury during the war and received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters. One citation read "awarded for courage, coolness and skill" while participating in heavy bombardment missions in the air offensive over continental Europe.

After the war he found work as an Agronomist in Belle Glade, Florida at the Everglades Experiment Station. His work consisted of cooperative pasture grass planting with cattlemen of South Florida. While in Belle Glade he was introduced to his wife Ruth Jameson a preacher's daughter, whose father J. O. was the pastor of the Community Methodist Church which Leonard was attending. They were married on January 25, 1947. Four children followed: Dan, David, Betsy and Donnie. He completed his Masters of Science degree from University of Illinois in 1947.

In the late 1950's he and Ruth moved to Homestead, Florida to raise their family and work as educators in the Dade County school system. He taught 7th and 8th grade Science at Homestead Junior High School. Leonard and Ruth's retirement years were spent in Gainesville, Florida enjoying children and grandchildren.

Leonard was preceded in death by his parents, FC and Edith Payne, Brothers Carroll Payne, William Payne, Robert Payne, Merle Payne and Sisters Dorothy Payne Nixon and Winifred Payne Haslinger, wife Ruth J. Payne and son Donald Mark Payne. He is survived by his children, son Daniel Jameson Payne and wife Christine, and son Leonard David Payne of Gainesville and daughter Norma Elizabeth "Betsy "Glaze-Jones of Fayetteville, North Carolina. His grandchildren are Michael Payne and wife Meghan of Nashville, Tennessee, Patrick Payne of Brevard, North Carolina,

David Glaze and Dan Beam of Tampa, Florida and Kelly Glaze of Tallahassee, Florida. His three great grandchildren are Brecken Andrew, Ryann Kate and Blakley Mae Payne of Nashville, Tennessee.

The funeral service will be held on Tuesday, April 15th, 2014 at 2:00pm in the Trinity United Methodist Church Chapel with Dr. Dan Johnson presiding. There will be a visitation one hour prior to the service starting at 1:00pm. Interment with military honors will follow at Forest Meadows Memorial Park Central.