

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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Elwood L. Smith 1912 - 1942

*"They shall not grow old, as we that are
left to grow old:*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the years
condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the
morning*

We will remember them."

- Laurence Binyon -

Carlton's first casualty of World War II was Elwood L. Smith, a life-long resident of Waterport.

Smith was born February 15, 1912, the first child of Mary Sargent Smith and George Smith. He was raised, along with his two younger sisters, by his mother on a farm belonging to his grandfather, James Sargent, located on the Waterport-James Road. Elwood attended Waterport School and graduated from that high school in 1930.

Following his graduation Smith was employed as a mechanic at VanWycke's Garage in Waterport. As hobbies he enjoyed working on cars and according to his sister: "used to like to go down to the creek fishing." (Waterport residents of the time just referred to Lake Alice as "the creek".)

In February of 1941 Elwood Smith entered the United States Army. He was 29 years of age. The month before, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had addressed a joint session of the 77th Congress. He appealed for its support to defend the four Essential Freedoms: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear. It is possible this declaration may have, in part, prompted Smith's enlistment.

Smith trained at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. He attained the rating of Technician 5th Grade with the U.S. Signal Corps and was assigned to serve in Manila and Bataan in the Philippine Islands beginning in August of 1941.

Pvt. Smith was at Bataan when it fell. He was one of the 10,000 U.S. prisoners-of-war who began the infamous Bataan Death March on April 10, 1942. He survived the 6-day, 120-mile atrocity, and was interned at the Japanese Cabantuan Prison Camp, where hundreds of military personnel succumbed to maltreatment, malnutrition, and cold-blooded murder at the hands of their captors. T/5 Elwood L. Smith died of malaria on July 19, 1942. He was 30 years old.

Communication in 1942, due to international conditions and the fact the Japanese had no intention of abiding to any rules of compassionate or civil conduct, was primitive by today's standards. Thus, the family of T/5 Smith was notified he was missing in action as of May 7, 1942. They received a follow-up letter to the same effect on May 7, 1943. It was not until August 31 of 1945 that his family received another letter; this one containing



Elwood Smith

a personal card belonging to Pvt. Smith.

An Albion newspaper published the following obituary: "The remains of Tech. 5th Grade Elwood L. Smith, age 30, who died July 1942 in the Philippine Islands while in the U.S. Army Service with the U.S. Signal Corps will arrive Monday evening, October 24. Friends may call at Merrill Funeral Home. Committal services will be held at Mt. Albion Cemetery October 25 with full military honors by Sheret Post #35 American Legion and Strickland Post #4635 Veterans of Foreign Wars." The year was 1949.

Elwood Smith is survived, this half century later, by his two sisters: Mrs. Marguerite Foss of Waterport and Mrs. Katherine McKenna of Medina.

In April of 1964, Mrs. Earl Plummer of Kenyonville, Smith's mother, received the following document from The White House, in Washington, D.C., signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson:

"The United States Of America Honors
the Memory of Elwood L. Smith"

"This certificate is awarded by a grateful
nation in recognition of devoted and
selfless consecration to the service
of our country in the Armed Forces
of the United States."

Lysbeth A. Hoffman
Carlton Historian