



## Orval W. Smith

September 7, 1923 - January 14, 2015

Orval W. Smith, aged 91 lifelong resident of Custer, passed away on Wednesday, January 14, 2015 at Spectrum Health Ludington Hospital following a brief illness. Orval was born on September 7, 1923 in Custer, the son of Lloyd R. and Waneta Smith and graduated from Custer High School with the class of 1941. He served his country during World War II with the U.S. Army in the European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre as a heavy truck driver. Orval literally drove across Europe as a member of Company B, 312 Combat Engineer Battalion, "Golden Acorn" Division, engaged in many battles such as the Battle of the Bulge in Ardennes, Luxemburg, Czechoslovakia, and throughout Central Europe and was awarded the Purple Heart and 3 Bronze Stars. Upon his discharge, Orval returned home and married Ila M. Price on October 16, 1948 at the home of Rev. Frederick Stewart, and they have celebrated 66 blessed years together.

Orval was very active in his community. He was a Charter and Life member of the Custer Gold Bar VFW Post 5096, Past Commander, and a faithful member and mentor of the Post Honor Guard. He was a member of the Custer Fire Department for over 50 years, the longest serving member of the department, was a former councilman of the Custer Village Council, and volunteered every fall at the West Michigan Old Engine Club operating the Fire Engine Soda Pumper when the club hosted children from the local schools. He employed at W. Reader & Sons in Scottville before working at Harbison-Walker in

Ludington for over 30 years, retiring in 1988. Orval loved to bowl, and when he wasn't bowling, he could often be found playing a game of setback with his friends at the VFW in Custer, or the Optimist Hall in Scottville. In his younger days, he also enjoyed hunting and fishing around Mason County.

Orval will be greatly missed by his wife Ila, his daughter Diane Loree Smith of Ludington, his son Duane Kevin Smith of Custer, his sisters-in-law RuthAnn (Curtiss) Berndt of Freesoil, and Rosalie Price of Ludington, many nieces and nephews, and numerous friends throughout the community. Orval was preceded in death by his parents, his sister Lorraine Hinzman, and his brother LaVerl "Pete" Smith.

Friends may meet with Orval's family for a time of visitation on Saturday, January 24 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville. A graveside funeral ceremony with honor rites performed by the Custer VFW Post and the Custer Fire Department will be held at Riverside Cemetery in the spring.

Those who wish to make contributions in Orval's memory are asked to consider the Custer Gold Bar VFW Post 5096, or the Custer Fire Department.

# Cemetery Details

## **Riverside Cemetery**

800 South Custer Road  
Custer, MI 49405

# Tribute Wall

RM

“ I first met Orval in early February of 1943. Our assignments in the 312 Combat Engineers of the 87th Infantry Division caused us to be together most every day of our service. When the war was over, we were both discharged in December 1945. Thanks to Orval's wish to keep in touch with WWII buddies, he sent out letters to all that he could find an address for. And he found me! For many years we shared our lives thru phone calls & letters, until April of 2012 when my daughters Bev & Diane joined me in a trip to Custer to meet Orval, Ila, & his daughter Diane. What a great visit! To meet again after 66 years and remember those years so long ago. Thanks again to the Custer VFW for hosting a wonderful luncheon honoring both of us. Wonderful memories, made with a dear friend.

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**Roger (Boots) Murray** - January 25, 2015 at 02:21 PM



“ 1 file added to the album 91st Birthday



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**Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services** - January 23, 2015 at 01:38 PM

AF

“ *Amy Faltinek lit a candle in memory of Orval W. Smith*



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**Amy Faltinek** - January 23, 2015 at 11:44 AM

BS

“ *Orval Smith was a very nice man I met almost three years ago when my father, Boots Murray, sister Diane Spinelli and I came to Luddington, Michigan, for a reunion for two WWII veterans. It was wonderful and memorable. We were introduced to Orval's family the next day and had a fantastic celebration at the VFW in Custer. The entire family opened their arms to us and treated us like family. Orval showed us around his town, including the fire department where he had volunteered for a very long time. He was so proud of it all.*

*I know everyone that knew Orval will miss him very much. He was a big part of his home town and loved it and the people he knew. Dad has fond and funny memories of "adventures" with Orval during WWII that he will always treasure. Thanks, Orval, for contacting Dad those few years ago so we had the opportunity of meeting you ourselves.*

*Beverly Steele*

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**Beverly Steele** - January 22, 2015 at 06:15 PM

DS

“ Dear Ila, Diane & the Smith Family,  
I met Orval, Ila, & Diane in April 2012 when my sister, Beverly Steele, and I joined my Dad, Roger Murray, on a trip to Custer to reunite Dad with Orval after 66 years.  
Dad & Orval spent every day of three years together while serving in WWII. Even after 66 years it was evident the strong bond & friendship that still remained between the two men. The VFW had a surprise celebration in their honor, and the local newspaper interviewed Dad & Orval and printed wonderful pictures & stories of their service and reunion. We had so much fun.  
That was a memorable trip for so many reasons, but Orval, Ila, & Diane instantly felt like family. Warm & welcoming, funny & kind, and very proud of their community. Orval wanted to share his life with us, and that included a great visit to the fire dept.  
I am so very sorry we did not back to Custer, but I will forever treasure that visit.  
Ila & Diane, I am so sorry for your loss. We miss Orval, we honor his memory, and we hold dear your friendship.  
Our thoughts & prayers are with you.  
Diane Spinelli (Murray)

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**Diane Spinelli** - January 22, 2015 at 05:18 PM

SW

“ Orval Smith was my Uncle and when I young, most of my grandparents children and grandchildren lived very close or in Custer. He was always there and cared about everyone. But he always had a soft spot for children. He did a lot of woodworking in addition to everything else. He will most definitely be missed. We are not able to attend this weekend, but all the family and friends will be in our thoughts. Uncle Orval, we love you, we honor and salute you and will miss you very, very much!

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**Sharon Witt** - January 22, 2015 at 08:03 AM

LS

“ *Linda Shively lit a candle in memory of Orval W. Smith*



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**Linda shively** - January 21, 2015 at 09:30 AM

RB

“ *1 file added to the album 91st Birthday*



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**Ron Bacon** - January 20, 2015 at 11:32 AM

MO

“ *Our condolences to the entire Smith family. We are related ( Jennifer is Jack Schroeder's daughter). The memories of the Smith Family Reunion at the Bob & Elaine Rader's stand out most. We saw Orval a couple months ago and it hard to believe he passed so fast. God bless all!*

*Michael & Jennifer OHerron*

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**Michael O'Herron** - January 20, 2015 at 06:34 AM

RB

“ I grew up next door to Orval and Ila and have been friends for my whole life. He was a walking history book about our community. It was true gift to have him as a friend and caring person, one you could rely on for anything at any time.  
He helped my father in so many ways after my father had a stroke.  
He will be missed,  
Ron Bacon

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**Ron Bacon** - January 19, 2015 at 08:03 PM

MH

“ I feel PRIVILEGED to have met and worked with Orv. Along with his "brother" Dick Smith, Orv was there attending meetings of the Mason County Allied Veterans Council of which I have been an officer of. His support was so dearly appreciated. Such a kind man. He will be greatly missed.



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**Michelle Hemmer** - January 19, 2015 at 02:19 PM

SS

“ Orval was born into a household that consisted, not only of his parents but his grandfather, two aunts and two uncles. My mother was one of the Aunts. She was about 12 at the time and I think Orval was kind of like one of her little brothers. All through my life, Orval was there. He was so helpful and loyal to us. He did things because they were there, because they needed to be done, because it was the right thing to do. After my father died and we moved to Custer, my mother and I were so well and lovingly cared for by the host of relatives on both sides of our family. Orval was not only a neighbor, he fixed things that were broken, and plowed a driveway after a storm. We watched their TV, used their phone and depended on them for transportation. We went to the Drive In and played croquette in the summer on their front lawn. It was just normal that their family was across the street and that our families and lives ran together. It was only later that I realized what a wonderful childhood I had in the Village of Custer.

Not only is Orval a WWII Veteran, he also has a Purple Heart that he didn't talk about much because he got it diving for a fox hole. Although I can't come home for the funeral, please know that your kindness and friendship and help will always be remembered by me. I am a better person for having Orval W. Smith as a cousin. I salute you Orval.

*Sue Sanders Shealy*

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**Sue Sanders Shealy** - January 15, 2015 at 07:32 PM