



## Dr. L. Dean Nelson

February 23, 1923 - May 28, 2014

Dr. L. Dean Nelson, 91, passed away at Cottingham House of Oconee Hospice of the Foothills, Seneca, SC, on May 28, 2014.

Dr. Nelson was born in Rice Lake, WI, the son of Melvin Otto Nelson and Margaret Gygli. His father died in an accident when Dean was 6 months old and his mother raised him as a single mom. He was the husband of the Rev. Mrs. Janet "Gig" Nelson, who predeceased him. Surviving are his daughters Karen Nelson Basso (Derek) of Gaston, SC, Gail Nelson Jones (Arthur) of Stanfordville, NY and Dr. Beth E. Nelson (Stanley Fullwood) of Granby, CT; step-cousin Rob George, and loving nieces, nephews and step-grandchildren.

Dean studied airplane mechanics and worked in Chicago prior to enlisting in the Army Air Corps during WW II. Through the Army Specialized Training Program he was sent to Alfred University, Alfred, NY, where he and Gig met. He fought with the U.S. 69th Infantry Division in Germany, and participated in the historic April 25, 1945 link-up of "The Fighting 69th" and the Soviet 58th Guards Division near the River Elbe in the vicinities of Torgau and Strehla, Germany, which hastened the end of World War II on V/E Day, May 8, 1945.

Dean and Gig were married on April 13, 1946 after Dean was discharged from the Army. They honeymooned in Beaufort, SC. While Gig supported them, he studied at the Pacific University College of Optometry in Forest Grove, OR,

graduated, and interned at an optometric practice in Wellsville, NY. In 1953 he established his own practice in Hamilton, NY. He was chairman of the NY All-State Optometric Extension Program for 12 years, and attended the Gesell Institute for Optometric Visual Development. He was deeply involved in his community as president of the Hamilton, NY Rotary Club, chairman of the Hamilton Planning Commission, a director of the Mid-York Health Center, and an officer in the Hamilton Lions Club. As a member of the Park United Methodist Church he had many lay ministries including serving as lay leader; and was a member of the Administrative Board, the Nominating Committee, and the Every Member Visitation Committee. He was chairman of the Board of Trustees, the Finance Committee and the Special Improvement Drive, and served as Church School Superintendent.

In 1980 he sold his practice and transitioned to a part time work schedule, moving to Vernon, NY to live in the parsonage of the Vernon United Methodist Church where Gig was pastor. They retired in 1984 and moved to the foothills of the Blue Ridge in South Carolina where they were involved in a number of churches, including those where Gig served as guest preacher. They both volunteered for the local chapter of Meals on Wheels. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in 2011 with a party at home.

Dean expressed his creativity in woodworking; he built beautiful furniture, creative toys which Gig would paint, and furnished their kitchen with cabinets.

He was an extraordinary man who was professionally accomplished and widely respected, fiercely loyal to his family, and deeply involved with his church and community. He instilled in his daughters the strong Mid-Western values with which he was raised. His loving family misses him terribly.

In lieu of flowers, his family requests that memorial gifts be made to Saint Mark United Methodist Church, 616 Quincy Road, Seneca, SC 29678, [www.s](http://www.s)

aintmarkumcseneca.org; or to the Nelson Internship (focused on women's health) at Bryn Mawr College, Resources Office, Helfarian, 101 North Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2899, (610) 526-5121; or to Cottingham House of Oconee Hospice of the Foothills, Oconee Medical Center Foundation, 298 Memorial Dr., Seneca, SC 29672, [www.oconeemed.org/hospice](http://www.oconeemed.org/hospice). A memorial service will take place at the convenience of the family. Online condolences may be shared at [www.davenportfuneralhome.com](http://www.davenportfuneralhome.com).

A memorial service will be held in honor of Mr. L. Dean Nelson Saturday, August 9, 2014 at 2:00 PM at Saint Mark United Methodist Church, 616 Quincy Road, Seneca, SC 29678.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

AUG 9. 2:00 PM (ET)

St. Mark United Methodist  
616 Quincy Rd  
Seneca, SC

# Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. L. Dean Nelson*

January 28, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ *It was a blessing to visit with Dean and Gig through the years, always a mountain top experience at their beautiful mountain home, and to minister as a layman with them in the United Methodist Church. -Reg Tatum, Walhalla, SC*

Reg Tatum - August 06, 2014 at 09:07 AM



“ *As a neighbor and friend of Dean for some seven to ten years or more, I can say that he was a truly helpful and stellar human-being. Having been removed from the area for some number of years I was saddened in learning of his and Gig's passing. I did not know he was a former aircraft mechanic, infantryman AND optometrist. What a man. His loss is the Kingdom of Heaven's gain!*

*W. Sterling Schermerhorn*

W. Sterling Schermerhorn - July 12, 2014 at 09:58 AM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Karen Basso - June 19, 2014 at 04:20 PM

KD

*Dean and Gig together again! Such a sweet photo.*

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**Kele Davenport** - August 05, 2014 at 02:11 PM

MB

“*Leroy (Dean) Nelson has been an incredible influence on my life through many meetings over the years. Through he and his wife, Gig, their daughter Karen is married to my Dad, and he and Gig became our surrogate grandparents. We visited them whenever we could from Vancouver to South Carolina. They were our role models for marriage and growing older with joie de vivre. My favourite memory is trying to keep up with Dean as we followed him as he drove down the mountain, he was 90 years old, and we could hardly keep up, he was such a confident driver! We love you and miss you, bless you in your resting place. Love Melanie, Seamus, Daniel, Patrick and Katie Frain.*

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**Melanie Basso** - June 16, 2014 at 12:09 AM

KB

*Melanie, thank you so much. Mom and dad loved you and your family and were so pleased that you wanted to visit.*  
*Karen*

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**Karen Basso** - June 19, 2014 at 04:13 PM

GJ

*Melanie, thank you for writing such lovely thoughts; it means so much to us.*

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**Gail Jones** - June 20, 2014 at 07:49 PM

MS

“ *The Spellicy's were saddened to hear of Dean's passing. He was my first mentor after purchasing his Hamilton, NY practice in the early 80's. His compassion for people was always stressed both in and out of the professional setting....those same guidelines have allowed the Hamilton practice to expand to a large independent practice still in Hamilton. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of his family.*

*Dr. Michael P Spellicy and family*

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**Michael P Spellicy** - June 12, 2014 at 06:03 PM

KB

*Dr. Spellicy, thank you so much. Your comments mean a lot to me and my sisters.  
Karen Basso*

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**Karen Basso** - June 19, 2014 at 04:14 PM

GJ

*Thank you, Dr. Spellicy. He and Mom were truly compassionate people.*

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**Gail Jones** - June 20, 2014 at 07:54 PM

PH

“ *It was an honor and a pleasure taking care of Mr. Nelson. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you at this sad time.*

*Patricia Holcombe*



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**Patricia Holcombe** - June 01, 2014 at 12:08 AM

RB

*Dr. Nelson was one of the most important persons in the positive trajectory of my life. I was brought to his astute, nurturing care before I was 3 years old. Back then, my problem ("lazy eye") would have been automatically treated by the majority of doctors with cosmetic surgery. (As you read the rest of this testimonial tribute, please remember the context of tiny Hamilton NY in 1962.....) Instead, Dr. Nelson worked with me and my family on a course of visual training ---which included several days per week of one-on one work with him from my toddler years up through my early teenage years----which restored my vision in both eyes. Beyond his medical expertise and insight, he never lost sight of his responsibility to not only treat my visual problems, but to treat my development as human being. Imagine a little toddler, and later an awkward, developing adolescent girl-- with lack of coordination due to no depth perception at all...this means not being able to hit a softball, catch a ball of anything other than beachball size, hit a tennis ball, play "hackey sack", catch a frisbee, always being picked last for teams in public school gym class.... His words to my parents, "She needs to be good at something" were a central reason my parents helped me focus on music, and I became a professional cellist. I will never forget what I learned from Dr. Nelson and am forever indebted to him.*

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**Ruth Berry** - June 13, 2014 at 12:24 PM

GJ

*Patricia, thank you for your loving care of Dad.*

*Ruth, bless you for sharing your story; it's a great comfort to my sisters and me that Dad had such an important impact on your life. Thank you.*

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**Gail Jones** - June 20, 2014 at 08:00 PM