

William Thomas Nelson, 69

May 23, 1924 — June 26, 1993

HARLAN — William Thomas Nelson, son of Emil W. and Cella (Trough) Nelson, was born May 23, 1924, at Harlan. He died at the Bishop Clarkson Memorial Hospital in Omaha, NE., June 26, 1993, at age 69 years, 1 month, and 3 days. He was baptized, received his First Communion and confirmed at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Harlan. He attended school in Harlan and graduated in 1942. While in high school, he was the Drum Major for the high school marching band, was active as a thespian acting in plays and also participated in track. He was also an accomplished saxophone player, winning national championships in 1940, 1941 and 1942. After high school, he went on to attend college at Drake University in Des Moines, before being drafted into the U.S. Army Corps in 1943 during WW II. While in the Air Corps., he became a pilot receiving his wings while training in Phoenix, AZ. He also trained as a tail gunner for B-17 bombers. He also flew prop planes as well as jet aircraft before receiving his honorable discharge Nov. 5, 1945. He then returned to Harlan for a year before he went to Phoenix, AZ. He married Elaine Joyce Aug. 22, 1945 in Phoenix, AZ. One daughter was born to this union. While in Phoenix, he was employed as dry waller. In 1957, they moved to Harlan and he went to work at Nelson Motors as a auto body repairman.

May 18, 1974, he married Carolyn (Hoepfner) Owen in Harlan. He continued to work at Nelson Motors until 1977. He then did dry wall taping, was the assistant manager of the Harlan Skating Rink and most recently worked at the Harlan Theater and Video Mart. Since retiring in 1991 because of his health, they have continued to make their home in Harlan. He was a member of St. Michael's Catholic Church of Harlan; and had been active in the Harlan Community Chorus; and the Blenders Quartet.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by one sister Margaret. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn of Harlan; 1 daughter, Dennis Christensen (Alan) of Omaha, NE.; 1 grandson; his twin brother, Robert Nelson (Marjorie) both of Harlan; his sister, Carolyn Hodapp (Dennis) of Lubbock, TX.; 2 step-sons, Steve Owen (Ellen) of West Bend, WI.; and Scott Owen of Highlands Ranch, CO.; 1 step-daughter, Shari Heese (Frank) Boone; 3 step-grandchildren; nieces, nephews and other relatives.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated June 29, 1993, at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Harlan with Msgr. Edward Kelly celebrant, assisted by Rev. C.G. "Gary" Nienkamp with a special reading by Rev. Paul Schoepf. Military rites were conducted at the Harlan cemetery by the Harlan American Legion, Helmer Reyelt Post #150 with Keith Bauer, Cuy C. Harlan, Jimmie Juelsgaard, Harold Huebner, Ron Jensen and Al Woodraska honorary casketbearers. Casketbearers were Vern Else, Harry Nollen, Ronald Jacobsen, Joe Stroehrer, Ron Thraen and Fred Carlson. Pauley Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.