



## Earl Dean Browning

January 21, 1926 - February 22, 2021

### E. Dean Browning

Earl Dean Browning, age 95, of Godfrey, Illinois, passed away at home in the early morning hours of Monday, February 22, 2021.

Dean was born January 21, 1926, in Annawan, Illinois, to Earl Franklin and Velma Lucille (Moon) Browning. A star basketball player, he graduated from Annawan High School in 1944. Following high school, Dean served his country from 1944 to 1946 in the United States Army rising to the rank of Technical Sergeant (Platoon Leader) in the Anti-tank Company 35th Infantry Regiment 25th Division, Tropic Lightning. Dean was awarded the Bronze Star for gallantry for serving 165 consecutive days in frontline combat service including the invasion of Luzon, the taking of the Balete Pass and the capture of Santa Fe. He was also awarded the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, Good Conduct Medal and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon. He was among the first Occupation Troops in Japan.

After service, he followed his high school sweetheart, Ardythe Machesney to Western Illinois University where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Education with a major in Industrial Education in 1951. Immediately following graduation, Dean and Ardythe married June 23, 1951 at the Fairview United

Bretheren Church in Annawan.

Seeking employment as married teachers was challenging in the early 1950s because school districts would not hire both husband and wife. However, following a special board meeting, Dean and Ardythe were approved and began their teaching careers in Alton, Illinois. They were the first couple to teach in the same building and the first couple to be central office administrators. During his tenure in the Alton School District, Dean taught all areas of industrial education classes before earning his Masters of Education in Vocational Education from the University of Illinois and becoming Director of Adult Education. As Director he designed Manpower, Apprenticeship and General Education Development Programs, some of which were adopted worldwide. While serving as President of the Vocational Administrators Association, he received his Advanced Certificate of Specialist with work in Guidance and Counseling from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. In 1968 he became the Administrative Assistant for Vocational Education and oversaw the grant writing, design, specification and construction of the J. B. Johnson Career Development Center which was, at the time, the second largest vocational school in Illinois. Dean was awarded the Illinois State Board of Education Outstanding Vocational Education Administrator of the Year and was known throughout the Midwest as “Mr. Vocational Education”.

Dedicating his life to education, Dean believed that every student could be successful and make a significant contribution to society when they received guidance and training that supported their skills and passion. Having grown up poor, during The Great Depression, he never wanted to see a student go without necessary equipment or supplies that would hinder their education. Many students were the recipients of his anonymous generosity as he and Ardythe purchased, uniforms, shoes and other supplies for students in the vocational programs.

Retiring in 1988, after 37 years in the Alton School District, Dean was an active participant and frequent medal winner in the Senior Olympics, and enjoyed playing Saturday morning basketball well into his 80s. He also enjoyed wood working and made toys for many area children. Dean knew how to fix anything and his garage became the neighborhood spot for help and instruction with bicycle, toy and car repair and other assorted life lessons. Nominated by his former students, he was honored with a place in the Alton High School Wall of Fame.

He was recently honored on his 95th birthday with a drive by parade of local first responders and Godfrey Mayor, Mike McCormick. It was truly a moment of great joy and pride for him.

Preceding him in death were his parents, infant sister, Esther Irene; brother, Delmar Boyd Browning; sister-in-law, Ruth Browning; mother-in-law, Pearl Machesney; father-in-law, James Machesney; brother-in-law, Blaine Bonyng; and close friend and foxhole buddy Gene Bennett.

He is survived by his wife of nearly 70 years, Ardythe; their daughter, Lexa Browning-Needham and her husband, James E. Needham of Alton; grandchildren Rachael (Cameron) Williams of Huntsville, Alabama; James A. (Shannon Ryckman) Needham of Montrose, Colorado and Jonathan (Kara) Needham of St. Peters, Missouri; great-grandchildren Kate, Cam and Jack Williams, Hank, Ira, and Dean Needham; sister-in-law Carol Bonyng; niece Susie Browning and nephew Don Browning.

The family wishes to thank Dean's many professional and compassionate caregivers for their excellent and life sustaining care, including Missy from the Jersey County Health Department and the staff from Unity Hospice with special thanks to his nurse, Sarah.

Graveside services and burial with full military rites will be held at the Annawan Community Cemetery on Friday, February 26, 2021 at 1:00 pm. For the health and safety of all attendees, masks are required.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to E. Dean Browning Memorial Vocational Scholarship.

Gent Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Online guestbook may be found at [www.gentfuneralhome.com](http://www.gentfuneralhome.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Annawan Community Cemetery

Annawan, IL

# Previous Events

## Graveside

FEB **26**. 1:00 PM.

Annawan Community Cemetery  
Annawan, IL

# Tribute Wall



“ *Earl Dean Browning*

January 28, 2023 at 10:19 AM



“ *Earl Dean Browning*

January 28, 2023 at 08:19 AM



“ *Our hearts are with you during this difficult time. It was an honor to care for Mr. Browning. -Unity Hospice*



**Shannon McGinn-Corona** - March 01, 2021 at 09:24 AM



“ *I worked with Mr. Browning many years. He was very nice to work with and very professional.*

*Wilma Stinnett*

**Wilma Stinnett** - February 27, 2021 at 01:07 PM



“ *My sincere sympathy to Ardythe & Lexa and extended family. What a beautiful blessing to share seventy years of marriage together and throughout all those years all you have blessed. R.I.P. Mr.B Job Well Done. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. Janet (Norris) Sanders*

**Janet Sanders** - February 26, 2021 at 04:20 PM

KE

“ We are so sad to hear of the passing Dean. He was a loyal customer of King since 1994. He loved bringing in the articles from The Telegraph when Mike was coaching Alton/SIUE hockey. He would laminate the article and bring it by the office and chat. He was so interesting to talk to. He served our country and was a WWII veteran. He invested in our children teaching in the Alton School District. He lived a full life. Thank you Dean for serving our country, being a loyal customer and for taking time to bringing in those articles. We will miss you. May God comfort and give your family peace during this time. Our Deepest Sympathy to your family.

*Mike & Karen Edwards  
King Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc.*

---

**Karen Edwards** - February 26, 2021 at 03:56 PM

WS

“ Mrs. Browning, Lexa, and Family,

*My sympathy to you and the family. Having been your neighbor for 12 years as a child and young adult. I saw Mr. Browning almost daily, and at the vo-tech building of AHS. I remember how nicely Mr. Browning kept the yard in such beautiful condition, every weekend without fail he mowed and trimmed the yard, and kept all the bushes and trees beautifully landscaped. It was not uncommon to see him washing the cars and shining them up, with his beloved dog Cindy. When outdoors Cindy was always by his side. Mr. Browning used to show me how she would sit for a treat, which I enjoyed. He had a nickname for me "Willy", and he was the only person I allowed to call me by that name, that was something we shared.*

*I had an opportunity to see Mr. Browning in 2015 when I came to visit my ill Mother. I was thrilled to see him when I drove down Ladue with my Wife. I parked the car on the street and jumped out and introduced myself and he remembered "Willy", I gave him a hug and talked for a bit and Mrs. Browning came out to visit a bit too. I was happy that I had the opportunity to introduce my Wife to him, my Wife is a serious fan of our WWII veterans, so it was a momentous occasion for her. I had told her of his service, (which I did not learn of until I was older, from an Alton Telegraph story about local veterans).*

*Mr. Browning was a good role model and a patriot, and I was lucky to have known him for the years I was around the neighborhood and as a young man.*

*Mr. Browning you will be missed by many, but never forgotten.  
William "Willy" Spooner*

---

**William E Spooner** - February 25, 2021 at 11:37 AM

EG

“ I had the pleasure of working with Dean when we were both administrators in the Alton School District. I hope that people will remember everything that he did to make the Vocational program in Alton the finest in the state in the 70's & 80's.

*I was surprised to see that Dean was a star basketball player in high school. I remember playing basketball with Dean on Saturday mornings at North Middle School. He had a very unique style. I wasn't sure if it was basketball or football. He never dribbled the ball. I know that I always wanted him on my team to avoid coming home with a lot of bruises.*

*Thanks to his dedication as a teacher and administrator many young people had the opportunity to have a career with good jobs. Rest in peace Dean, you truly were a difference maker.*

---

**Ed Gray** - February 24, 2021 at 08:28 PM

JD

“ Dean was the person that first to give me a job at Alton high school. He was fair and helped me through the the first year of my teach. I will always remember him.

---

**John Duggan** - February 24, 2021 at 03:42 PM

DD

“ To Lexa and your family,  
*I met your father twice while we were involved with the International Graphic Arts Education Association. Each time as one Industrial Arts Teacher to another we talked “shop” and I enjoyed those discussions. He was proud of you, following in his footsteps, teaching students vocational skills that will last a lifetime.*

*Dennis & Elaine Dougherty*

---

**Dennis Dougherty** - February 23, 2021 at 10:48 PM

SM

“ *First met Dean when I went to West Junior and he taught shop. Was a good teacher and always pleasant and kind to the students. He was the same person when I came back to Alton. Will always remember him.*

---

**Steve Mottaz** - February 23, 2021 at 07:28 PM

JB

“ *To Dean Brownings Family:  
Thinking of you at this time of sorrow. Dean will always hold a special place in my heart. He was truly a caring and loving person and the most dedicated administrator Alton School District will every have. He truly cared about his staff and students.  
With Much Love,  
Jim and Patsy Belk*

---

**Jim Belk** - February 23, 2021 at 06:47 PM