

B. J. Craft

(This is a sample history which, along with many others, will be published in the upcoming book *“Lest We Forget” - A Tribute to the Veterans of Smith County, Mississippi*)



B.J. Craft was born on April 14, 1918, near Sylvarena, Mississippi, in the Mount Pleasant Community of Smith County. His parents were Ben Jessie and Claudia May Grant Craft. B.J. graduated from Sylvarena High School in 1936. On February 7, 1942, he entered the United States Army where he became a Surgical Technician, Fourth Grade. He was part of the Ardennes, Battle of the Bulge, Northern France, Central Europe and Battle of Germany campaigns. B.J.'s service record included the EAMETO Medal, Medical Badge, Good Conduct Badge, a French Citation of Valor, a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Two Clusters. He ended his military service on October 21, 1945, and returned to Smith County. Using the GI Bill, he attended Mississippi Southern College (now The University of Southern Mississippi) and worked as a banker for thirty-seven years in Raleigh, Mississippi. B.J. was a charter member of the Sylvarena American Legion Post 114 where he was a member for over sixty years. On September 24, 2008, B.J. passed away and was buried in the North Raleigh Cemetery, Raleigh, Mississippi. About the year 2000, B.J. started recording some of his memories for a book published in 2002 by the Mississippi Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. *What is Brave? Reminiscences of Fear, Loneliness, Hope, and Endurance* was published to raise funds for the Battle of the Bulge Memorial in the World War II Museum at Camp Shelby. In preparing his thoughts for publication B. J. wrote: “All events are true and I have not embellished the telling, but rather the gory part was omitted. The first few hours spent after landing in France are etched in my mind. We had not gone far until we passed a new cemetery of G. I.'s killed in the early fighting. Crosses—row on row—introduced us to the task ahead. This journey through part of my life was filled with emotions, but, not one time did I think my number would be called. I was glad to be serving at such a historic moment, yet I would not want to repeat any part of it.”