

Elmer J. Mears

3/19/1926-11/18/2012

Elmer J. Mears, Veteran WWII, age 86, of Lombard. Beloved husband for 65 years of Eileen Mears, nee Adderson; loving father of Col. (ret.) Christopher C., USAF, (Dorothy) Mears, Constance E. (Richard) Reeder, Robert D. (Marsha) Mears, and Gerard J. (Terry) Mears; devoted grandfather of Stephanie (Dylan) Jawahir, Christopher J. Mears, Cara (Mark) Stamm, Melissa Dill, Jamie (Shawn) Workman, Jessica (Frank) Wilkins, Robb (Maria) Mears, Kayla Mears, Brandon (Erika) Mears, Derek Mears, and Aubrey Mears; great-grandfather 11; fond brother of Donald (Pamela) Mears, Donna (Jim and the late James Dalton) Kerry; uncle of many nieces and nephews.



Visitation Friday 4-9PM at Knollcrest Funeral Home, 1500 S. Meyers Rd. (3 blks S of Roosevelt) Lombard. Funeral Saturday 10:15AM from the funeral home to Christ the King Catholic Church. Mass 11AM. Private Interment at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

Memorials Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, Kansas 66675.

Source: Knollcrest Funeral Home website

Eileen's address is 1815 S Main St, Lombard, IL 60148

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The following is an interview Elmer which appeared in [mysuburbanlife.com](http://mysuburbanlife.com), dated October 30, 2012

As election nears, 'Greatest Generation' WWII vets still hopeful for America's future

At 86, Elmer Mears comes from a different era.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps as an 18-year-old, fresh-out-of-high school kid, propelled to fight in World War II by dreams of being a pilot.

Instead, the military sent him to Guam and Saipan as an aircraft radio technician — once even checking radar on the Enola Gay well after the plane dropped the bomb that leveled Hiroshima, Japan.

After two years, he returned home to Downers Grove in 1946, married his sweetheart and ran a life insurance company. They raised four kids and never knew debt, save for the home mortgage they took to buy the insurance business.

Now, looking back, he and many other World War II veterans don't see the same homefront.

They were boys back then — young, able-bodied soldiers with a sense of duty. Today, they're in their 80s and 90s, many with sharp minds and strong opinions whose bodies now require walkers. Back then, war pulled the nation from a recession. Now, times have changed — some ways for the better in their eyes, some worse.

They're members of what's collectively known as the Greatest Generation — they've seen surpluses and depressions, civil rights, the Internet, man walking on the moon.

Now, the nation is poised for change once again with the presidential election. And for many WW II vets, this election could be their last.

Survivors of the last great war are dying at a rate of 740 per day, according to the U.S. Veterans Administration. The U.S. sent 16 million soldiers to WWII, but as of a year ago, the VA estimated there were just 1.7 million left, a number expected to shrink in half before the next election.

Looking around today, vets such as Mears — who settled in Lombard after living in Brookfield — think the country is in good shape.

He sees more people enrolling in college, as well as newly built houses full of families when he travels to weekly fish fries at Wheaton's VFW.

But not everything's perfect.

He sees family members deep in college debt with few job prospects when they graduate, and a recession that's plateaued. And he knows that that on election day, not everybody votes.

"It's amazing," he said, shaking his head. "After all, this is our country."

Mears will go to the polls on Nov. 6. He'll vote for Mitt Romney.

His main sticking point is President Obama's health care plan. Mears doesn't like that it requires the uninsured to pay a penalty. And he worries it might boost his own medical costs.

He likes Romney's plan for smaller government, for delegating issues like health care to the states. He's heard critics say the former Massachusetts governor is too rich, too out-of-touch, but Mears has been around enough to know lots of candidates come from wealth.

"Look at John Kennedy," Mears said. "Look at Ronald Reagan. They were all rich."

But other veterans, such as 93-year-old Albert Zari, look at the candidates and aren't impressed with either option.

“You don’t believe them, either one,” said Zari, a former electrician who retired to St. Charles in 1992. “Obama got elected on promises and (broke) a minimum of 50 percent of them. Romney hasn’t got a program. ... I don’t think he can change the economy.”

Zari spent two years as a Naval warship inspector after growing up in Chicago during the Depression. His father was out of work for years, there was no government aid and he still doesn’t understand how his mother always managed to put food on the table.

Back then, he grew up with a school across the street and a butcher shop on the block, allowing neighbors to get to know each other and invest in the community. Today, he thinks that sense of respect is gone — even among politicians.

“You read the newspapers and see pillars of the community that are thieves and cheats,” he said. “I don’t think the population... has respect like they used to.”

But Aaron “Arky” Sperling, a Westmont veteran, doesn’t see it the same. He called Obama and the health care act he championed “the greatest thing that happened to us in the last four years.”

Like Zari, 90-year-old Sperling believes everyone should be their neighbor’s keeper. He just wishes that same “it takes a village” mentality would extend to the government.

“They should be for the whole country,” he said of politicians. “Republicans won’t pass (Obama’s) legislation. ...The more cooperation he would get, the more he’d be able to do.”

Sperling — who enlisted in the Army after Pearl Harbor — has never been without work. He’s always had insurance. He retired from the dry cleaning business only when macular degeneration stripped his sight. But he feels it’s right for Obama to help the uninsured and the middle class — he just needs more time.

“The country’s always in flux,” he said. “Sometimes it goes up. Sometimes it goes down. Right now, it’s undecided.”

On the other hand, Wheaton veteran William Howard Chittenden calls the president a “very fine man,” but will vote for Romney. The veteran who has a Romney poster taped to his front door thinks Obama’s made mistakes — especially with the nation’s debt.

“There’s no end to his idea of borrowing and spending,” Chittenden said. “You can’t do that as a family, and you can’t do that as a country.”

Chittenden agrees with Romney's stance on less spending, even if it means cuts to his Social Security and veteran's benefits. He reasoned it's for the good of the country.

"He supports the concept of American freedom to a much heavier degree," Chittenden said.

Freedom is something Chittenden seems to value to this day. During the war, the former Marine Corps member spent four years — 1,364 days to be exact — in Asian prison camps.

"Somebody who's been in my life situation honors those American freedoms more," he said.

That may be why he keeps up with the news. At 92, Chittenden knows this election might be his last, but he admitted it's hard to predict the future.

He'll be 96 when Americans visit the polls again. But as he likes to point out, "my mother lived to be 97."

Source: <http://www.mysuburbanlife.com/>