



## **HERMAN ABNER BUFFINGTON**

Co K 383<sup>rd</sup> Infantry

Herman Abner Buffington, 88, a long-time North Georgia newspaperman and World War II combat veteran, died July 13, 2014 at his home in Jefferson surrounded by his family after a long battle with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Visitation will be held at 5 p.m. Tuesday, July 15 at Evans Funeral Home in Jefferson, followed by services at 6 p.m. at Evans. Interment will follow at Woodbine Cemetery in Jefferson and military rites will be observed. Mr. Buffington was a native of Rome, Floyd County, Ga. born May 7, 1926 in the community of Texas Valley. He was one of seven sons of the late Abner Cyrenius and Essie Green Buffington. In August 1944, Mr. Buffington entered the U.S. Army and was eventually assigned to the 96th Infantry Division, the "Deadeyes," seeing action in the Pacific Theater. He was a combat soldier in the final battle of WWII with the invasion of Okinawa on Easter Sunday, 1945. Okinawa was one of the bloodiest battles in American history with over 12,000 American servicemen killed and another 36,000 wounded. Mr. Buffington was wounded by mortar fire the day before the battle ended. For his combat service, Mr. Buffington earned the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon with two battle stars (Okinawa and Saipan), the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Philippine Independence Ribbon, the Good Conduct Medal, the Victory Ribbon and three overseas service bars. The 96th Division was one of only four Army divisions to earn the Presidential Unit Citation in WWII. Mr. Buffington was active in the annual 96th Division reunions held at various places around the country and attended the events until his health began to fail. In 1995, he returned to Okinawa in observance of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa. Mr. Buffington was featured on Col. Oliver North's "War Stories" television series and he wrote a book, "Okinawa: Etched Deep in My Mind," a few years ago about his war experiences. After returning home from the war, he met the love of his life, Helen Toles, on a blind date. She was a reporter with The Rome News-Tribune. They married in 1949 and celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary earlier this year. Mr. Buffington attended the Carroll Lynn School of Business and the Rome branch of the University of Georgia after the war on the GI Bill. He worked for Vic's Goodyear Tire, Bradshaw Tire Company and the Celanese Corporation in Rome and Pepperell Mfg. Company in Lindale. In 1960, the Buffington's went to work for The Summerville News

in Northwest Georgia where he served as advertising and circulation director for five years. In 1965, the Buffington's bought The Jackson Herald in Jefferson. Amid a tumultuous time that saw the county's district attorney bombed and murdered, Mr. Buffington as publisher and his wife as editor took the struggling small-town newspaper into profitability and editorial success through an intense focus on local news and repeated tough calls for cleaning up the county's multiple layers of corruption and organized crime. The Buffington's launched The Banks County News in Homer in 1968 and bought The Commerce News in Commerce in 1987. The firm purchased The Madison County Journal in 1997 (later merged with the Comer News and Danielsville Monitor) and adopted a new corporate name for the growing group of newspapers that year, MainStreet Newspapers, Inc. The firm now publishes six weekly newspapers in Northeast Georgia. Mr. Buffington served as a director of the Georgia Press Association from 1982-1985 and received the GPA's Golden Club Award for 50 years of working in the newspaper industry in Georgia in 2010. In addition to his work as a newspaper publisher, Mr. Buffington was active in his church, his veterans groups and other local civic and community events. He was a member of Jefferson First United Methodist Church, a lifetime member of the Jefferson Lions Club, a member of the Commerce Kiwanis Club and a director of the Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce, a group he helped organize in the 1970s. In 2000, Mr. Buffington and his wife were honored by the Chamber with the William Booth Community Service Award, the chamber's highest honor. Mr. Buffington was a leader in having a war memorial placed at Jackson County's Historic Courthouse and the establishment of a monument at the Historic Courthouse as a memorial to District Attorney Floyd Hoard, who was murdered in Jackson County by organized crime figures in 1967. Mr. Buffington enjoyed photography and did most of the newspaper's photography and darkroom film developing for many years. He long enjoyed quail hunting and raising bird dogs and for many years could be found every Thanksgiving Day in the woods with his teenage sons and a dog, hunting for quail. In earlier years, he hunted in the mountains behind Berry College in Rome with his brothers and other family members. The publisher was interested in history, especially military history from the American Revolution forward. He and his wife enjoyed international travel for several years with visits to such places as Western and Eastern Europe, Israel and the Philippines. Survivors and spouses include his wife, Helen; two sons, Michael Herman Buffington and Scott Lee Buffington and Wendy all of Jefferson; four grandchildren, Brittany Buffington Truelove and Taylor, Martin Lee Buffington and Brittany, Blair Michael Buffington and Clark Thomas Buffington, all of Jefferson; two step-grandsons, Jonathon David Nix and James Joshua Nix, Jefferson; three great-

grandchildren, Axle Lee Buffington, Macy Mae and Max Henley Truelove, all of Jefferson; two brothers, C.D. "Tim" and Edward Buffington, both of Rome; and a brother-in-law, Thomas Taylor Toles, Jr., Jefferson. He is also survived by 17 nieces and nephews and many great-nieces and great-nephews. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the Jefferson First United Methodist Church, 188 Martin St., Jefferson, Ga. 30549. Evans Funeral Home, Jefferson, is in charge of arrangements.