

# Oswald George Jett (1917-2003)

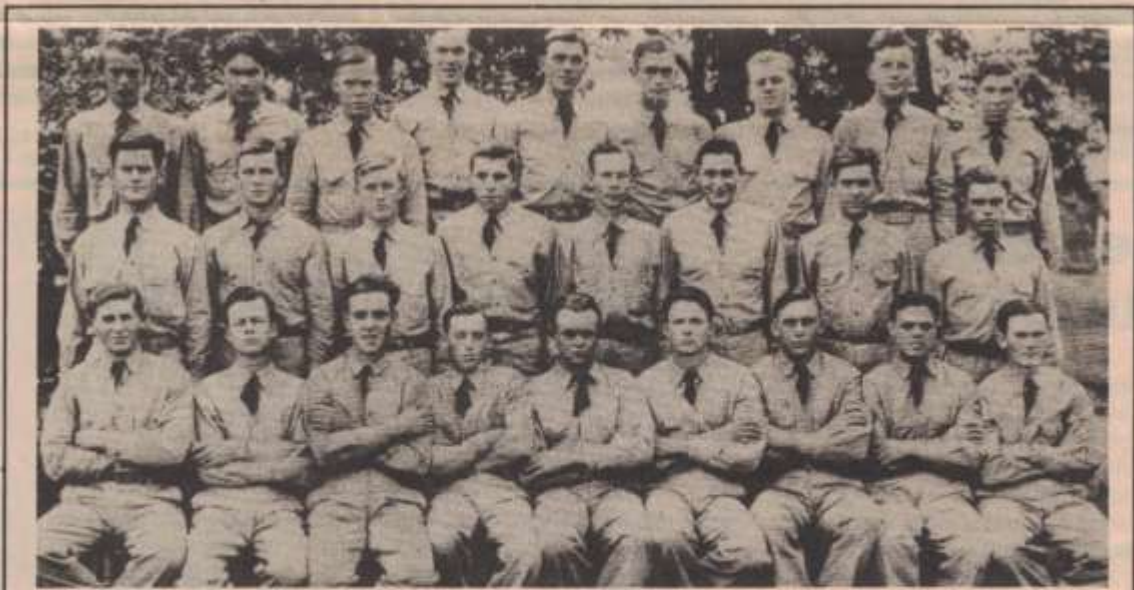
By Jerry Long



Hillcrest Memorial Park Cemetery, Lexington, KY



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 5 January 1995, p2:



A Civilian Conservation Camp group in Owensboro in the 1930's. See any Hancock County boys? First row from left: Okle J. Adams, Elbert McPherson, Norman A. Arnold, Charles W. Howell, Wilson C. Brown, (?) T Whittaker, Adrel Kitchen, Jessie L. Murphy, Arnold Fentress. Second row: Bernard Livers, Leslie Wagoner, Cecil Wilkerson, James Wedding, Wallace Ladd, William Downs, James F. Gass, Paul Ferguson. Top: Neal McIntosh, (?) Stone, James Wilkinson, Leonard Miler, Lincoln V. Peters, Oswald G. Jett, Fred Phillips, Dalton L. Dunn, James Schr(?).



Ohio County News, Hartford, KY, 5 January 1945:

**Reynolds Station  
Soldier Cited In Italy**

With the Fifth Army, Italy—Private Oswald G. Jett of Reynolds Station, Kentucky, recently was cited for meritorious service on the Fifth Army front in Italy.

He is serving in a collecting platoon of the medical detachment with the first armored division.

Jett and his comrades accomplished the task of evacuating 233 civilians, 34 of them litter cases, from an area in and around the town of Pontedaro, Italy.

Much of the work was done in areas heavily mined and under intense enemy mortar and small arms fire. In addition the platoon carried out its regular assigned duties.

The soldier's father, Richard C. Jett, lives on Route 2, Reynolds Station.





Oswald Jett was honored as 'Historian of the Year' at the Historical Society's annual banquet Monday night. Jett, who now lives in Lexington, has written several articles and books detailing the history of Hancock County. Mr. and Mrs. Jett accepted the honorary plaque from Historical Society President Mary Emmick. (See story page 6) —Clarion photo S.W.

## *Former resident Oswald Jett recognized as Hancock "Historian of the Year"*

A former resident of Hancock County was honored Monday night for his decades of writing on the history of the area. Oswald Jett, now residing in Lexington, was recognized as historian of the year at a banquet for his achievements in preserving the history of the community.

"He is a dedicated, serious minded local historian," said Jack Foster, a Hancock County museum board and historical society member.

Jett has written numerous articles and books on Hancock County's past. Most notable among his works are "Hancock County When It was Frontier Country," "Pioneer Pathways Widen" and "More Nostalgia on Hancock County."

He has also contributed to other publications such as "Forgotten

Pathways" and "The Kentucky Explorer," and has been a guest writer for the Clarion's "So It's Been Told" history column, normally written by Foster.

"Mr. Jett was one of the first persons to contact me as a guest columnist when I started writing So's It's Been Told in 1980," Foster said. "He has written consistently on a variety of subjects for the column every year since."

Jett graduated from Pellville High School in 1933, served with the 1st Armored Division in Italy, France and Germany during World War II, and graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1948.

Jett began writing about historical topics as a hobby after his graduation from U.K. He is a retired U.S. Postal Service employee who lives in Lexington with his wife Marie.



Kentucky Explorer,  
Jackson, KY, May 1997:

**Historian Of The Year**



It is with great pride we learn that Oswald Jett of Lexington, a regular contributor to *The Kentucky Explorer*, was recently honored as Historian Of The Year in his native Hancock County. The award was presented to Jett by the Hancock County Historical Society.

Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY  
30 September 1982, p2:

**LETTERS**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Hancock Clarion wishes to encourage readers to express their opinions, gripes or praise in the Clarion's "Letters to the Editor" column. All letters must be signed and we ask that you include your telephone number so that we may call you to confirm whether or not you are the actual writer. We will not publish your name along with your letter, if that is your wish, but all letters must be signed.

September 26, 1982

Editor, The Clarion

I'm not keen on seeing my name in print as I dislike my first name so much, but you should be congratulated on printing items from old Clarions. Please keep it up. I'm sure many others are as interested in early Hancock County as I am.

We also applaud the action of Judge Fallin and the Hancock County Fiscal Court in assigning Mrs. Claribel Phillips to organize the old records in the Courthouse. It should have been done long ago. Mr. Foster and Mrs. Watkins also contribute valuable folklore and genealogical information to your newspaper, and so does Dr. Joe Ford. Please continue their columns, and know they are appreciated by many of your readers.

Oswald Jett  
3411 Greentree Rd.  
Lexington, Ky. 40502

Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 3 July 1986:

**Historical Society  
urges public to read  
Jett's new book**

One of the avowed goals of the Hancock County Historical Society is to preserve the rich heritage of the county in any form, said Horace "Sonny" Temple at a recent meeting of the Society, so when a book is written about the county by a native of the county it is an important milestone. He encourages all to read Oswald Jett's "Hancock County, Kentucky, When It Was Frontier Country" which covers the county's roots and up to the time it became a county in 1829. Mr. Jett, retired and now living in Lexington, graduated from Pellville High School, and spent his business career with the U.S. Postal Service. He advises that he has two

sequels in progress, one will take the county from 1829 to about 1875, and the third will then take it to the present. He especially praises the third book since he believes that most readers will relate to more names, places, and events in the book about recent times. He is shooting for the summer of 1987 as a publication date for these two books.

Meanwhile the Hancock County Library will have copies of Mr. Jett's first book soon, and Mr. Temple hopes that the Hancock County Schools will add copies to the school libraries for research and study. Those who wish personal copies or who want to buy copies for gifts can order from McDowell Publications, Rt. 4 Box 314, Utica, Ky. 42376. The "Hancock County, Kentucky, When It Was a Frontier" book is \$34.95 (hardback), \$26.95 (softback) postpaid and Kentucky residents add 5 percent sales tax.



**Hancock County, Kentucky When It Was Frontier Country, Volume 1, Oswald Jett, McDowell Publications, Utica, KY, 1986, Foreword:**

The idea for this book was born a few weeks after Hancock Co. historian Dorothy Watkins asked if I cared to contribute nostalgic memories to her book. It didn't take long to realize I could dig up much more than she could use. I also decided I wished to elaborate on the intertwining relations of the early settlers who converged on my native county.

I was not content to mention the name of a settler at a wedding, estate auction, church organization, etc. without trying to identify him or her. I wanted to put in print, the gradually changing lifestyles, generation to generation, of our ancestors from the American Revolution to the present. Unfortunately, I was unable to condense the mass of material into one book. After two or three years of gleaning frontier data from court house records, publications of historians and historical societies, old Hancock Clarions and other newspapers, and over 250 books in public libraries, I had scrawled some 1500 pages in longhand in 20 notebooks.

At no time in history has the world changed more than in my generation --- from horse and buggy transportation to space travel, narrow dirt roads to hard-surfaced, multi-laned superhighways, kerosene lamps to fluorescent lighting, open wood burning fireplaces to solar heating, ankle-length dresses to mini-skirts, silent movies to television, fox trots to break dancing, Saturday night play-parties and home musicals to stereovision, traveling Chautauqua shows to Disneyland, adding machines to computers, and cash to credit cards. People of my generation remember customs and sights that have disappeared from the earth and will never return; and those experiences deserve recording for posterity.

My original plan was to present a nostalgic remembrance of the "good old days," but I soon became engrossed in the several prior generations of ancestors; their games, songs, food, clothing, transportation, schooling, religion, customs, and environment; and was forced to break off with the creation of Hancock Co. I have no idea how many people will be interested in such a book, but I have no illusions on realizing a profit from my efforts. I have compiled a manuscript I would enjoy reading myself if someone else had done it, and the completion represents my own satisfaction. I have always loved history and believe many others would have learned to appreciate it if their teachers had not so often turned them off by stressing the memorizing of so many specific dates.

So many people have helped with the genealogy or in other aspects I can hardly mention them all. Dorothy Watkins and Parrie Hawes started me off several years ago in my family researching, and I have snatched many tidbits from Dorothy's "Climb Your Family Tree" columns. Other personal sources include John and Opal McDaniel, Mabel McDaniel, Stella Jackson, Embert Barlow, and Gladys Inman of Pellville; Cosby Temple, Louis and Frances Thompson, Imogene Jackson, Hobert McDaniel, Mary Lee Fuchs, Walker Haynes, Jerry Long, Patty Gubler, and Ernest & Lucille Day, of Owensboro; Flora Hardin, Henry Bruner, L. T. Newton, Becky Vaught, and the late Karl Herzog, of Hawesville; the late historian, teacher, and postmistress of Patesville, Lillie Pulliam; R.O. Beauchamp of Kettle, Ky., Carl Lamar of Lexington; Mrs. Rose Merritt of Philpot; Mrs. Emily Sue McConnel of Mooresville, N.C.; Gilbert Voyles of Arcadia, Ca.; Clarence Robert Poole of Whittier, Ca.; Harold Newton of Denver, Wyoming; Erolld Wiscombe of Brigham City, Utah; my cousins, Naomi & Sue Acton of Scottsburg, In.; my Snyder-Lyons relatives, Nina Hughes of Palm Bay, Fl. & Cynthia Watson of San Diego, Ca.; and my good friends at Lewisport,

Claribel Phillips and Jack Foster, without whose encouragement I might not have completed this book for publishing. I have generously helped myself to Jack's "So It's Been Told" columns in the Clarion, so I am deeply indebted to both him and the editors of the Hancock Clarion.

Some of the above contributors have been instrumental in facts to be reported in the subsequent book on family relations and nostalgia from 1829 to my generation, which I hope to finish within a year of this one. Other sources are detailed in the footnotes section. It is impossible, of course, to write a book on lifestyles and events that happened from 88 to 150 years before I was born without a lot of help. My sincere thanks are expressed to all.

I had no idea that crediting references would cause such problems. When several resources record the same fact or event, varying in details, it is difficult to place the specific source by title, author, and page. Another problem was that some of my data was jotted down long before I decided to write a book, and the source was forgotten. Even when I recalled the title or author I was often unable to locate the book, even when I was certain of the particular library. They were out of circulation or lost to book thieves. The very interesting book on the memoirs of Col. Robert Patterson and John Johnston was one of these. It not only disappeared from the shelves of the public library of Lexington but also from the Historical Library at Frankfort.

Another cause for head scratching, reorganization, and retyping was material found too late to put in the proper order without shifting other sentences or paragraphs, resulting in some footnotes being out of sequence.

I tried not to use abbreviations that require explanation but I should make clear that my dates are entered by month, day, and year. In my mind I was born 1-28-1917, not the 28th of Jan., 1917. I apologize for the unprofessional appearance of my typing, particularly in the improper hyphenization that I mistakenly believed would help to even the margins. I knew better but did it anyway.



**Trilogy on the Settling of  
Hancock County, Kentucky  
by Oswald Jett**

**Book One - Hancock County When It Was Frontier Country**

Follows the ancestral families from their origins in the Revolutionary era to their homes in the Breckinridge-Ohio County region, ending with the creation of Hancock County in 1829.

It describes migrations by various groups of families via rafts, flatboats, keelboats, Conestoga wagons, packhorse trains, etc. into the wild frontier; suffering the hazards of river and trail pirates as well as Indian ambushes.

Topics discussed include buffalo paths and Indian trails; river perils; fantastic landscapes, gigantic trees, and the "dreary howling wilderness," the settling of Fort Hardin, Barnett's Sta., Fort Hartford, Yellow Banks, the Beech Woods, and other spots, a listing of early land grants in the area, frontier economy, food, clothing, quilts, and other furnishings, log rollings and house raisings, tools and utensils, crops, spinning, weaving, tanning, and dyeing procedures, sickness and medicines, including the "doctrine of signatures," camp arbor meetings during the Great Awakening in Ky, after 1800, frontier schooling and the first churches and preachers, taverns,

songs and games of each generation, including the long-running play-party games (with their origins); anecdotes, and special adventures.

Among the early maps is one of 1803 showing the numerous large tracts of land owned in the region that became Daviess and Hancock Counties, and part of Ohio County.

Around 4,000 identified names are mentioned in the index. There is a listing of the 1829 taxpayers of Hancock Co, with their families, and their locations as far as could be determined. Several families in the adjoining counties are also described. 392 pages, softbound - \$26.95, hardbound . \$34.95.

### Book Two - Pioneer Paths Widen

This volume continues the development of Hancock County and its environs; following the descendants of the original settlers, and ending with 1875. As in the first book, an attempt is made to identify all names mentioned (some 6,000) in the 467 pages.

Topics discussed include records, locations of settlers, (including Daviess and Ohio Co areas), early voting precincts; postoffices; settlement names before they were changed; elegant houses, and the description and sketches of specific large log houses; early roads, with the names and identification of the road hands and their overseers; river transportation and its hazards; steamboats and ferries, and later trains.

Farming procedures; improving tools and new products; food preserving; indenturing of children and slave auctions; doctors, druggists, teachers, preachers, and their identification; the various churches and their problems, listing and identification of charter members, and also the church membership of Panther Creek in 1841; the terrible epidemics of milk sickness and cholera; more brush arbor meetings (revivals); clothing; games and recreation; popular dance tunes and other songs, year by year; and the continuing play-parties in the rural areas.

Deeds and the first landowners; the early newspapers and their editors and publishers; the county merchants and their stocks and prices; hotel keepers and tavern operators and their rates; early millers and other occupations; the thriving lumber and coal industries; names and identifications of the towns' residents in the census years; wild-running cattle and "taking up strays."

The Civil War in the Hancock Co. area, including the names and identification of over 100 soldiers, a few of them born, in an adjoining county; postmasters serving Hawesville, Lewisport, and Pellville; early members of the Masonic lodges and the I.O.O.F.; and the expressions and slang of the 19th century, including some of their origins. The origins and meaning of some expressions are also included in the first book.

Maps include the plats of Lewisport, Landersville, and Pellville, and the listing and identification of Pellville residents when the town was incorporated in 1870.

This volume will be available late in 1987.

### Book Three - The Last Four Generations in Hancock County

[Note: Upon publication the title of this volume was changed to  
More Nostalgia on Hancock County]

This book is completed except for several alterations and the indexing, and will be about the size of the second volume. It covers the era. from 1875 to the present and is involved with the descendants of the original settlers, plus others. More than 6,000 people are identified.

Topics include the roads, road crews and their overseers, and their identities; stage coaches, and the planning and construction of the Texas RR through Hancock County, its stations and time

table; towboats and river packets, "store boats;" listing of the county schools and churches; development of Normals (teacher-training schools) and many of the student teachers; drug stores and patent medicines; treatments of various ailments; doctors and other professionals;

Listings of the first Roseville church members, and the Panther Creek membership roll of 1876; the organization of the Baptist Blackford Association of Churches; the various locations, with deeds, of the West Point Bapt. Church; the development of the Pellville Church and others; the founding of the anti-mission Panther Creek Assn, and the religious camp meetings near Yelvington.

Residents of Pellville in 1880 and 1900; changing postoffices, postmasters, and merchants of the county; deeds; descriptions of various farming operations; the introduction of tractors and other new machinery and products;

The advent of new forms of amusement, including circuses, Chatauqua shows, phonographs and Victrolas, stereoscopes, moving pictures, and comic strips, the changing comic strips and songs, year by year, the history of country music and the Grand Ole Opry, the performers, radio and its popular programs and performers,

Typical store stocks, and the identification and location of the county merchants, several listings of teachers and students, and their identification, my school years at Pleasant Spring, Pellville, and Hawesville; the games, and customs such as debates and memory books; the magazine era and popular publications, changing clothing styles, the gradual replacement of the horse and buggy by the Tin Lizzie and other cars; several listings of popular movies and movie stars, year by year; Hawesville and its merchants, and locations, in 1925;

My first memories, new medicines and treatments, hard surfaced roads and the amusing signs of Burma Shave, the Great Depression and the New Deal agencies of the alphabet, such as the CCC, PWA, and WPA; school consolidations and the arrival of industry; a summary of changes during my lifetime.

All of these books will be published by McDowell Publications, 11129 Pleasant Ridge Road, Utica, KY 42376. (1-502-275-4075)



**Letter from Oswald Jett, of Lexington, KY to Jerry Long, Owensboro, KY:**

June 13, 2000

Dear Jerry,

Your thesis on the Long and associated families was most interesting to me, causing me to send you these comments, as so many people you mentioned somehow related to my family or my memories.

John Snider, Jr., who md. Mary "Polly" Newton in Botetourt Co., Va. Oct 7, 1808, was my gr gr grandfather.

Robert M Snider was, I believe, the youngest son my ancestor John Snider, Sr.

Long before my time, of course, Robert Tabb Bruner lived in a house near the Pellville cemetery. His father, Peter "Caney Pete" Bruner, had built the house. Caney Pete Md. first Hannah Davis and second Sarah Catherine Clark Voyles, the widow of my gr grandfather's brother, Lewis Hardin Voyles.



The house in Pellville passed on to the miller, and later Hancock Co. judge, Wm W "Bee" Spencer, and then to Oscar Long and wife, Susan Mary Early. In my high school years at Pellville the Longs still lived there.

Clement Joshua "Josh" Bruner was a friend of my grandfather, G W Jones. Both were Baptist preachers, and Josh frequently passed his house, where I lived, in a buggy. He was a son of R T.

Marcus Lafayette "Mark" Voyles was also a close friend of my grandfather Jones, and was a first cousin of my grandfather. He was a son of Calvin Voyles and Katherine Obenchain, and Calvin was the brother of my ancestor, David B. Mark was noted for memorizing the Bible while convalescing from an illness, and Robert Ripley once gave him an interview.

Minor E Pate and Rebecca May were the parents of Mary Elizabeth "Bee" Pate, who md. my grandfather's brother David W Jett Mar 20, 1873.

Indian Bill Hardin, son of Maj. John Hardin, and grandson of Marcus "Mark" Hardin, was somehow related to my gr grandmother, Eliza Jane Jolly Beavin and her sister, Alice Hardin Jolly Baker. Well of course, the middle name of Hardin could have been just to honor the captain.

(Hardin data furnished by Mai Dye, 10026 Stedwick Rd., Gaithersburg, Md 20879.)

William Wallace Tabor, a prosperous Hawesville merchant in the late 19th century and early 20th century, built a large two-story house on Jefferson St., and in 1924 my grandfather Jones bought the house and converted it into a boarding house. My family lived there in 1925-26-27.

Claude L Boling was a good friend of my father, although the former was a staunch Republican and the latter a strong Democrat. Claude's office of sheriff adjoined my dad's tax commissioner office.

Charles F and Henry Schafer were my friends at PHS, and no finer young men ever existed.

C Waitman Taylor, Jr was a classmate of mine in English at UK in 1945 or '46. At the time I thought he was a happy-go-lucky kid and was greatly surprised when he became mayor of Owensboro. Curiously, I went to school with two boys who became mayor of Owensboro. The other was Casper Gardner of Hawesville. Moreover, I was a classmate in commerce at UK with Ned Breathitt, the future governor of Kentucky.

Incidentally, I may someday give you my ancient research records of 30 years ago, I can't think of anyone else who would fool with them. I assure you I am not urging you to take over my ragged papers. I'm just asking if you want them. I don't mind trashing them if no one can use them. I also have three thick notebooks full of some data on around 200 families who settled in Hancock, Breckinridge, Ohio and Daviess counties. I will probably keep them to near the end of my life because I get so many queries and info from the many people who write to me. Some foolish people think I'm an expert on genealogy, and don't consider I am more of a historian.

Wishing you the best,  
Oswald Jett



**Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, 27 February 2003, p3:**

Oswald Jett, 86, of Lexington, widower of Marie Jett, died February 19, 2003. He was born on a farm in Hancock Co., KY. Survived by two sons, Richard Keith, and Robert Earl, and a daughter, Margaret Ann McMillen, one granddaughter, Amy (Chris) Marie Flowers, two great-grandchildren, Christopher & Stephen Flowers. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Linda Carol, the victim of a murderer, one sister, Thelma McCamish, one brother, Richard Cole Jett, Jr.

On his 24th birthday in 1941, volunteered his services to his country ten months before the tragedy of Pearl Harbor. Served four and one-half years in the U.S. 1st Armored Division, including 38 months overseas in the countries of Ireland, England, Africa, and Italy, to earn six battle stars for the campaigns of French Morocco, Tunisia, Naples, Rome, North Apennines, and the Po Valley. When the war ended, attended the University of Kentucky for a BS degree in Commerce. Entered the U.S. Post Office in 1949 as a substitute distribution clerk and retired in 1977 as auditor-reporter for the Lexington Postal Sectional Center. Enjoyed his retirement years by researching and reporting for "The Kentucky Explorer" and other publications, and also liked to bowl. During his long life he reached the conclusion that his purpose in life was to cultivate love, honesty, and consideration for his fellow man, as opposed to hatred, jealousy, arrogance, and avarice. Was a member of Immanuel Baptist Church.

Survivors include two sons, Richard Keith, and Robert Earl; a daughter, Margaret Ann McMillen; one granddaughter, Amy (Chris) Marie Flowers; and two great-grandchildren, Christopher and Stephen Flowers.

Funeral services were Friday at W. R. Milward Mortuary-Southland with Rev. Glen Cummins officiating. Burial was in Hillcrest Memorial Park. Expressions of sympathy may take the form of donations to Hospice of the Bluegrass, 2312 Alexandria Dr Lexington KY 40504.



**Kentucky Explorer, Jackson, KY, Vol. 18, No. 2, June 2003, p4:**



Oswald Jett, a contributing writer for *The Kentucky Explorer*, passed away at the age of 86 in February 2003. He retired from the Lexington Post Office 25 years ago. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marie. They were married 51 years.

Explorer Contributing Writer  
Fondly Remembered

Dear Editor:

My father, Oswald Jett, was extremely knowledgeable on the history of Kentucky. He passed away at the age of 86 on February 19, 2003. He had contributed 39 articles to the Kentucky Explorer magazine. He had written three books on Hancock County history and also his WWII chronicles. Since his retirement from the Lexington Post Office 25 years ago, he did an abundance of research on the genealogy of the Jett Family and allied families. He taught me the importance of talking about history and sharing it with everyone. His belief was that if you experienced history it should not be forgotten, so share it, and it will continue for future generations.

My father was a proud man with strong convictions. His purpose in life was to cultivate love, honesty, and consideration for his fellow man. He was opposed to hatred, jealousy, arrogance, and greed. He was a proud graduate of the University of Kentucky in 1948. He grew to be an avid fan of the UK basketball and football programs. He would tell stories of meeting George Blanda, the UK football great, who played longer than any other professional football player. He would also talk about working at the post office with Bill Keightley, the present equipment manager for the Kentucky Wildcats basketball team and has been for over 40 years. Keightley often told my father things that Coach Adolph Rupp experienced with his team.

My father served his country during WWII, joining on his 24th birthday in January 1941. He was overseas for 38 months, as an ambulance driver for the First Armored Division in Ireland, England, Africa, and Italy. He earned six battle stars for the campaigns of French Morocco, Tunisia, Naples, Rome North Apennines, and the Po Valley. He was a few miles from where they found and hung Mussolini. Also he would tell stories of dropping off patients to the same Army hospital near the Po Valley where the future senator of Kansas, Bob Dole was hospitalized. I would embellish the story that Dad was the one who took him to the Army hospital. You never know!

Dad had many memories of the war he may not have talked about, but I knew he was responsible for helping so many who were injured to go on and experience a life with their families. Sometimes fate played an important part in his life. On his trip back home after the war in Europe, on the Queen Mary, he was in his quarters lying down and felt the need to go to the restroom. He got up, and just before he came back a shot from the next room penetrated the walls and crossed the area where his head would have been if he hadn't moved. Needless to say, Dad had a guardian angel looking over him.

I feel that he is a guardian angel looking over me now. I am very proud to be his son and thank him for giving me life, so I can share my stories of life.

Robert Earl Jett  
3411 Greentree Road  
Lexington, KY 40517



**Bibliography of published works by or about Oswald G. Jett:**

**Books**

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