M. L. 'Lee' Caldwell

M. L. "Lee" Caldwell, 68, of 2405 S. Stilwell St., died at 11:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 24, 1996, at the intensive care unit of Mt. Carmel Medical Center. He had been in ill health for the past 14 years, and entered the hospital earlier Wednesday evening.

He was born Aug. 4, 1927, at Erie to Elmer Elsie and Florence Marion Knetzer Caldwell. He was raised at Erie, and graduated from Erie High School and the Chanute Jr. College, and then attended Pittsburg State University. He lived at Coffeyville before moving to Pittsburg in 1960.

Mr. Caldwell served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, in the Pacific Theater.

He married Noretta Magner on May 16, 1947, at Galesburg.

He worked as a carpenter, then advanced to foreman and superintendent with Fornesworth & Chambers in Texas. He helped build the Atomic Lab at Los Alamos. He started working for the Freeto Construction Company in 1953, and became owner and president in 1962. Some of his larger projects include the Interstate at Hope, Ark., Interstate South of Wichita, the Big Ridge at Tuttle Creek in Manhattan, Stockton Dam Project, Broken Bow Dam; Parsons Underpass, Toronto Fall River, Hula Dam, and Pomme de Terre. He won many awards for those projects.

Mr. Caldwell was a prominent contractor and developer in the Pittsburg area. He was President of the Board of Pittsburg City Commission from April 1965 to April 1967. He organized the Baker Fire Department and was active in it from 1975 to 1994. He served on the Elm Acres Board. He was a [sic] active member of the Friends of PSU. He also was the MoKan District Director of the Boy Scouts; National Director, Association of General Contractors; and a National Director of the Home Builders Association.

He was a former member of the First United Methodist Church.

Survivors include his wife of the home; two daughters, Karen Bryan of Pittsburg and Barbara Loiselle of Cherokee; a son, Gail Caldwell of Grove, Okla.; seven grandchildren; and a great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, Kenneth, who was killed during World War II, and Ralph.

Services will be 2 p.m. Saturday at the Bath-Naylor Funeral Home of Pittsburg, with the Rev. Larry Parker officiating. Burial will be at the Highland Park Cemetery, where the Pittsburg Benjamin Fuller Post No. 64 of the American Legion will present the flag-folding ceremony. The family will receive friends from 7 to 8 p.m. today at the funeral home.
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