

James Don Blankenship, 92, of Bryson City passed away Thursday, September 23, 2010 at NM Veterans' Home in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

Born January 1, 1918 in Robbinsville, NC, he was the son of the late James Barent and Arvie P. Garland Blankenship.

On December 24, 1938, he married WillaBell Penland and was married to her for 60 years. Don worked on the Fontana Dam for a period of two years and then made a decision to join the USMC. He was in the Marine Corp for three years. After serving in the military, he worked for the TVA in Bryson City for seven years. He was hired by the construction company, Marson & Kunuson and went to work in Iceland. In 1962, he was also formen for the Smith Hamalton & Beck Co. in Morocco, Africa, and worked in Pakistan for seven years where the Indus River Managla Dam was built. He continued to work in CA as a heavy equipment operator. He retired in 1973 and moved to Asheville with WillaBell.

He was a deacon of Tunnel Road Presbyterian Church in Asheville, NC.

He was preceded in death by his wife, WillaBell Penland Blankenship; step-son, Charles D. Woodard and wife Helen Estes of Sylva; two brothers, Jerome and Monroe Blankenship; sister, Margaret Blankenship Gambel; nephew, James Lyle Stroud; and niece, Betty Jean Wellen.

He is survived by his children, Donna J. Bentley and husband Bill of N.M., Clair A. Catts and husband John of TN, Herschel Blankenship and wife Diane of WA; grandchildren, Tonya M. Harris, C. Don Pursell, Katie Beaumont, Jillian Bates, Amber Augspurger, Lacey Blankenship; great grandchylidren, Emily Harris, Ashely and Mikayla Pursell, Walker and Lauren Beaumont, Chole and Charlotte Jane Bates, Zander Augspurger; and sister, Leota Blankenship.

Graveside services will be held at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, October 2, 2010 at Bryson City Cemetery. Rev. Charles Ray Ball will officiate with Military rites conducted by The Steve Youngdeer American Legion Post 143.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to: New Mexico State Veterans' Home, 992 South Broadway, Truth or Consequences, NM 87901; (575) 894-4200.