

A Community Life
Dorothy Granberry, Geneva Miller Historical Society

Calvin Douglass (1917-2021) died last week at his home in the Douglass Community in Stanton. Everybody in that community knew Calvin and until a few years ago he knew everyone there. His life was productive as well as long. It was a life that our parents, teachers, and preachers encouraged us to pursue, a life of service to community and the people among whom we live.

Born and raised out in the country, he was the second of five children born to Hattie Taylor and Freeman Douglass. He was named for his paternal great grandfather, Calvin Douglass, and his paternal grandfather, Nelson Douglass. His uncle, Mr. Will Douglass, helped raise him. Before going to World War II in the 1940s, Calvin lived and farmed with Mr. Will and his wife, Ms. Lees Douglass.

A man who did not bite his tongue, Calvin lived all of his 103 years in the Douglass Community except for the years he served in the United States Army. He underwent basic training in South Carolina and was part of a labor battalion that built the militarily important Burma Road in Southeast Asia. His uncle, Will Douglass was a World War I soldier and his maternal great grandfather, Daniel Freeman, was a United States Colored Soldier during the American Civil War.

His second marriage to Betty Ree Bowles resulted in a dynamic duo of two long-term community leaders. They were at the forefront of the Haywood County Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s that led to Haywood County blacks successfully regaining the right to vote in 1960, a right that had been fully denied since about 1910. He and Betty participated in many ways on the local level including housing out of state college students who came to Haywood County to support local organizations working for voting rights for all Americans.

A farmer all of his life, Calvin grew turnip greens and other traditional crops. When someone came by for a visit, he and Betty followed the tradition of offering the visitor a mess of freshly picked turnip greens or a jar of uncommonly delicious canned greens to take home when the visit was over. During his 70s and 80s Calvin was known around Douglass as the "community husband", a person residents could call on to cut the grass, give them a ride to town, fix a broken window, etc.

Like his ancestors before him, Calvin was proud of his two children, Sharon Douglass who married Melvin Lee and the late Maurice Douglass who married Deborah Tisdale, his grandchildren, and his slew of nieces and nephews.

Calvin's daughter, Sharon, would like those who wish to commemorate Calvin's many years of service to Haywood County, Tennessee, and the nation to make a contribution to the Douglass Community Center, PO Box 69, Stanton, TN 38069. Calvin Douglass was a strong and continuing supporter of the Center and its annual Douglass Festival.