

# Early's last wish couldn't be granted because of government regulations

Bill Early's dying wish was to be buried with full military honors.

His widow, Ruth Hambricht Putnam Early, could not grant his wish because of a federal requirement that gives these honors only to men and women who have served 20 years in the military or who died in service or who were recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Early received plenty of Navy commendations for shooting down four German/Italian ships and served in the Pacific Theater of Operations.

"We contacted U. S. Congresswoman Sue Myrick who tried to get through the red tape so that we could give Bill the honor he deserved," said his step-son, Phillip Putnam.

Putnam said Mrs. Myrick contacted friends in Asheville who secured an honor guard from the Navy to come to Kings Mountain for the services this week and Mrs. Myrick has been in close contact since with Mrs. Early, who just got home from



**LIB STEWART**  
NEWS EDITOR

sentimental journey to the 50th anniversary celebration of VJ Day aboard the USS North Carolina Battleship.

Bill had just had surgery on his eye and like Ruth was blind in the left eye but the invitation came from Governor Hunt and they said they used both good eyes to drive to Wilmington for the memorable commissioning of the battleship.

Early was a Navy boxer and middleweight champion on the USS Midway during World War II.

Early, 73, liked to tell his friends of how he got in the Navy. A farm boy growing up in the Dixon Community, he used to go rabbit hunting with Bud Yates and rode his horse almost every day to the Yates home in the Bethlehem Community.

Early said he joined the Navy and his friend joined the Marines to get away from the family farm. Before the war ended, Early said he was ready to return to plowing behind a mule.

the hospital.

Bill Early, as a member of a U.S. Navy gun crew, guarded an ammunition ship that Marines needed for their assault on the tiny South Pacific island 760 miles southeast of Tokyo, Japan.

He helped raise the flag on Iowa Jima nearly 52 years ago. But he always told his family he didn't consider himself a hero.

"The only heroes of Iwo Jima were the guys who were left behind in the graveyards," he said in an interview in The Herald in September 1995 in which he recalled VJ Day and he and Ruth's

# Debbie Clary appointed to committee

Rep. Debbie Clary of Cleveland County has been appointed to the 23-member committee overseeing the Governor's and Council of

State's swearing-in ceremony and parade on January 11, 1997 in Raleigh.

Jeanette Beckwith, principal of Leesville Road Middle

School in Wake County, will chair the committee of which Mayor G. R. Kindley of Rockingham will be vice-chairman.

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