

WWI Snapshot: Ernest Denning Cavanaugh, 1896-1969

By NORMA ECKARD
And AMY ECKARD
Guest Columnists

Ernest Denning Cavanaugh enlisted in the Regular Army soon after the U.S. joined WWI. He lived in Wilmington many years. He is included in the list of Brunswick County WWI veterans because while being transported to France in 1918, he reported his next of kin as his father, with a Southport address.

One of Ernest's brothers, Charles Irving Cavanaugh, served in WWI and WWII, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, according to his Findagrave entry.

Ernest Denning Cavanaugh was born in Newberry, S.C. His parents were born in NC and by the time of the 1910 U.S. Census, they had moved their family to Wilmington, where they remained until their deaths.

Newspaper stories from the time indicate Ernest was admired for his piano playing.

Ernest was a freshman in Trinity College (now Duke University) in 1916-1917. On June 6, 1917, two months after the U.S. entered WWI, he left college and enlisted in the Regular Army in Greensboro. He served in the Surgeon's Office of the 30th Old Hickory Division, serving overseas from May 11, 1918, until Sept. 7, 1919. The US Army Transport Passenger List shows he was scheduled to return on March 17, 1919, with the HQ Detachment but was transferred to the Medical Detachment and returned at the later date. He also had reached the rank of Sergeant First Class earlier that year.

His photograph was found on page 48 in the 1921 Trinity College yearbook when Ernest was a senior, and was copied into his Findagrave entry.

According to his obituary, Ernest Denning Cavanaugh

passed away on Oct. 4, 1969, in Boston. The Social Security Death Index shows Oct. 15, 1969, which is obviously incorrect, given the obituary below was published on Oct. 6.

Ernest D. Cavanaugh

Services for Ernest D. Cavanaugh of 3082 Argonne Drive NW will be Tuesday in Wilmington, N.C. Born in Wilmington, Mr. Cavanaugh was a rating specialist for the Veterans Administration. He was graduated from Duke University and Georgetown University Law School. He died Saturday in Boston. Survivors include three sisters and two brothers.

The Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 6, 1969, p. 30.

He was laid to rest in Oakdale Cemetery in Wilmington. Along with a family headstone, the military flat marker is located at his grave site. The date of death displayed is Oct. 5, 1969 (source: Findagrave).

If you would like to help us honor Ernest Denning Cavanaugh or another Brunswick County WWI veteran,

email the Friends of Ft. Caswell Rifle Range at ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com or go to caswellriflerange.com.

Funds continue to be sent to support the historical preservation of the 1918 World War I Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial and the book featuring all the men and women who served in the Great War from Brunswick County. Send donations to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, 5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell Beach, NC 28465.

A publisher is working on the book that hopefully will be ready by Veterans Day, 2020.



Photos contributed

Trinity College (presently Duke University) yearbook photo, 1921, Ernest Cavanaugh.



Military flat marker for Ernest Cavanaugh (source Findagrave).

Cavanaugh, Ernest D.		762,328	White.	1 1/2
(Surname)		(Christian name)	(Army serial number)	(Race: White or colored)
Residence:	Sunset Park	Wilmington	NORTH CAROLINA	
	(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(County)	(State)
*Enlisted in	RA Greensboro NC	-	June 6/17	-
†Born in	Newberry SC	-	21 1/12 yrs.	-
Organizations:	30 Div Surgeons Office to June 30/19 MD to disch. -			
Grades:	Pvt 1 cl June 6/17	Pvt Mch14/18	Sgt July 9/18	-
Engagements:	Sgt 1 cl Jan 16/19	-	-	-
Wounds or other injuries received in action: None.				
‡Served overseas:	May 11/18 to Sept 7/19			
§Hon. disch.	Sept 17/19	on demobilization		
Was reported	0	per cent disabled on date of discharge, in view of occupation.		
Remarks:	-			
Form No. 724-1 1/2, A. G. O. March 12, 1920.				
*Insert "R. A.", "N. G.", "E. H. C.", "N. A.", as case may be, followed by place and date of enlistment. †Give place of birth and date of birth, or age at enlistment. ‡Give dates of departure from and arrival in the United States. §Give date.				

NC Service Card for Ernest Cavanaugh.