

ORESKO, Nicholas Oresko

(Abstracted from the Jersey Record, Saturday October 5, 2013)

Nicholas Oresko of Cresskill, the nation's oldest Medal of Honor recipient, died Friday evening, surrounded by veterans and military personnel who had gathered there all week after hearing on social media that he was in the hospital with a broken leg. Oresko, 96, was a U.S. Army master sergeant during World War II when, although badly wounded, he wiped out two enemy bunkers near Tettingen, Germany, during the Battle of the Bulge. He died at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center of complications from surgery for a broken right femur, said John "Jack" Carbone, a family friend. That was the same leg injured by gunfire on Jan. 23, 1945, as he crawled from one enemy bunker to another. Oresko had no living immediate family, but he was never alone at the hospital after being taken there earlier in the week from a Cresskill assisted living facility, Carbone said. Veterans and young members of various branches of military service were at his side, with more than two dozen at the hospital Friday afternoon before he was taken to have surgery. "The kids held his hand and prayed with him," Carbone said. One of Oresko's friends, Richard E. Robitaille, had sent emails about the honored veteran's condition this week to students at Berkeley College in Woodland Park, where he is the vice president of military veterans affairs. Robitaille said those students posted the information on Facebook and other sites, leading to a massive outpouring of affection for Oresko from people across the country. "They understood the type of person we were talking about and said, 'We can't let him die alone,'" Robitaille said, adding that people have come from as far away as Maine and Maryland to visit Oresko during the week. "He's loved throughout the Army. He's an American hero." He said that an Army unit in Afghanistan waved a flag in Oresko's honor on Tuesday and mailed it to the hospital, but it had not yet arrived. Another longtime friend who was at the hospital on Friday, Bob Jerome of Park Ridge, said Oresko enjoyed speaking to young people. The high school in Bayonne, where Oresko grew up, was named in his honor a few years ago. Oresko talked about his experiences in battle for a story published in The Record in January 2012. In the early morning hours on Jan. 23, 1945, the 28-year-old set off to take out an enemy machine-gun bunker. "We [had] attacked their positions several times, and we got beaten back," he said. "It's terrible. It scares the hell out of you. "So we figured this time, let's sneak up on them," Oresko said. "Instead of getting prepared with artillery fire, let's just go as it gets dark and sneak up on them and then attack 'em." Oresko started out solo at 4:30 a.m. that cold winter morning. And he was resigned to not coming back alive. "I looked up to heaven and said, 'Lord, I know I'm going to die, please make it fast,' " he said. He tossed a grenade into the bunker and then rushed it with his M-1 rifle. Another machine gun opened fire and knocked him down, wounding him in the right hip and leg, yet he managed to crawl to another bunker and take it out with another grenade. "The machine gunner who shot me thought I was dead," Oresko said. "I was able to move around, sneak around, so they didn't see me. They saw me go down. They thought they'd killed me, but they didn't. I slipped around and somehow got around, and they were in a bunch." Oresko killed 12 German soldiers and refused to leave the area until he was sure his unit had completed its mission. "They wanted to take me back to the hospital," Oresko said. "I said 'No, let's take the position first.' I didn't want to give it up after doing so much." President Harry S. Truman presented the Medal of Honor to Oresko during a White House ceremony on Oct. 30, 1945. Funeral arrangements were pending Friday night. Carbone said that Oresko will be buried at the George Washington Cemetery in Paramus toward the end of next week.

OVENDEN, Jacqueline Recher Ovenden

(Abstracted from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution from 12/30/2004 - 12/31/2004)

Jacqueline Recher Ovenden, 72, of Atlanta, died 27 December 2004. She was born 24 October 1932. She is survived by her husband Leslie S. Ovenden, Atlanta; son, John F. Ovenden, Madison, FL; daughter, Regina Marie Ovenden-Stevens, New York City; grandchildren, Leslie Easton, Nicholas Ovenden and Sheridan Grace Stevens; brother, Frederick S. Recher, Atlanta; sister, Linda R. Ficken, Snellville. Memorial services will be held Monday, January 3 at 11 AM at Christ Lutheran Church, 176 West Sandtown Road, Marietta, GA. Arrangements by H. M. Patterson & Son, Spring Hill Chapel, 1020 Spring Street, (404) 876-1022.