

Willis (Bill) Maxwell Martin

Born: March 21,
1906 rural Kentucky

Died: Nov 21, 1973
DeBary, Florida

Period of Service: WWII
Army Europe
Sources: Cemetery, niece
Kathy Schultz through Carol
O'Neill

Bill was the second husband of Margaret E. Nelson (born May 13, 1917 on Island; died June 24, 2002 Lake Helen, FL). She was the third child of Olga (nee Ottosen) and Nels C. Nelson, and a widow of Jack C. Miller, who also is buried in the Island Cemetery.

Bill was a driver in the US Army during WWII and assigned to the USAAF 8th Air Force in England, driving senior staff, including General Eisenhower. The 8th Air Force was responsible for the strategic bombing campaigns over northern Europe. His rank and awards are unknown, possibly because of the fire that destroyed the service records in St. Louis in 1973. He probably enlisted because he would have been in his early thirties when he entered service in 1941. Probably was a skilled marksman since he was responsible for driving senior staff in England during the blackouts.

Before the war he was a cabdriver, and met Margaret when he lodged with her sister-in-law's family. After the war he worked for the railroad in the 1950's as a night watchman and signalman, but suffered a massive heart attack in 1960 and had to quit working. He occasionally entertained friends by showing the various signals for the trains. He and Margaret lived in a home in the Lakeview district on the north side of Chicago where he was an excellent carpenter and kept the building in good order besides making various things out of wood. When he applied for Social Security he found that he was three years older than he remembered from the sketchy records of his birthplace. So he got full benefits of SS at 65 rather than as the 62 years he thought he was. On a trip through Kentucky later in life he found the baptismal record ("little Maxie Martin") corroborated his birth date though a birth certificate was not available.

The move to DeBary, Florida, in 1972, helped his health a little but didn't finally ward off the heart attack that killed him in 1973.