

## WWII veteran VanDiver dies

By Jennifer Hewlett

HERALD-LEADER STAFF WRITER

Cecil R. VanDiver, a survivor of one of the greatest horrors of World War II, the Bataan Death March, died Wednesday at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center off Cooper Drive in Lexington. He was 80 and lived in Burgin.

Mr. VanDiver, a member of the National Guard 192nd Tank Battalion, was captured April 9, 1942, and forced by Japanese troops to walk about 70 miles with thousands of other U.S. soldiers in the infamous march in the Philippines. After the march, which left thousands dead, Mr. VanDiver lived in prison camps, doing such tasks as burying fallen fellow soldiers and mining coal. He was a prisoner until September 1945.

Bland Moore, a friend who was in the death march with Mr. VanDiver, said they helped each other out during the long trek.

"He was a good soldier and a good moral man," Moore said.

"Cecil never did think that he wasn't going to make it back, and that (way of thinking) kept a

lot of people alive," Moore said.

Moore said that after the death march Mr. VanDiver buried dead soldiers at Camp O'Donnell in the Philippines. Once, Japanese guards beat him severely when he tried to cover up a man's foot that was sticking out of a mass grave, Moore said. Later, Mr. VanDiver mined coal and worked in a steel mill in Manchuria.

Mr. VanDiver, a Harrodsburg native, was retired from the maintenance department at the old Kentucky State Hospital near Danville.

He was a member of Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and was a Mason.

Survivors include his wife, Ruby Hawkins VanDiver; two sons, Cecil Howard VanDiver of Carrollton and Robert Eugene VanDiver of Burgin; a daughter, Betty Jean VanDiver of Burgin; a sister; a grandson; and a great-grandson.

Services will be at 1 p.m. Saturday at Alexander & Royalty Funeral Home in Harrodsburg. Visitation will be from 5 to 9 p.m. today and after 7 a.m. Saturday.

## VanDiver Death 29 Oct 99

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Sat, Jan 30, 2021