



Angel A. Cruz

August 2, 1922 - November 19, 2020

On August 2, 1922, an angel was delivered on earth who possessed a giant compassionate heart for all who needed help. Angel Alfonso Cruz was born in Laredo, Webb County, Texas to Maximo Cruz and Macaria Cantu Cruz. Angel, Our Hero, passed peacefully on Thursday, November 19, 2020 at the age of 98+ years young (99 he would say) with his beloved wife of 73 years, Josefina Chapa Cruz, and his caring family surrounding him with love.

As a young boy Angel enjoyed life on the family farm assisting his father with chores, to include learning how to drive the farm truck, riding his bicycle and doing his school work, excelling in Math. Angel loved to run free and preferred to be constantly active. At the age of eleven, he busied himself with the farm work but loved to ride his beautiful horse when his work was done at the end of the day. One afternoon preparing to ride, Angel realized his horse was missing. Angel set out on his bicycle into the nearby woods to search for his horse, whistling his special signal that would bring the horse galloping to his side. He rode deep into the woods constantly whistling in every direction and behind every tree. It seemed like an eternity before he heard his horse neighing back to Angel's special whistle! There was the horse tied to a tree on neighboring property! Angel bravely confronted the neighbor man and got his horse back safely guiding him home. Upon hearing what happened, his family questioned why he allowed the horse he loved so much to roam free. Just like himself who loved to run, Angel said he wanted his horse to be free and not tied to a tree! His horse was never lost again! He shared many important

memories about his boyhood, recalling how his father helped feed those less fortunate and gave jobs to any that he could. He told of how his father felt it was so important to vote that he would give rides in the back of his truck to those who could not make it to the polls on their own and paid the poll fees for those with no money. This love of and pride in country was instilled in Angel from his strong desire to protect his country against enemies to his last opportunity to vote in the 2020 Election. Forever the patriot at heart!

When Angel was working at the "Chevrolet house" as his favored job of car mechanic and heard the news of the Pearl Harbor bombing, he immediately took action at 19 years of age just four days shy of his 20th birthday. Angel was always proud to say he "was motivated by his desire to fight fascism" and volunteered for the Army Air Corps on 28 July 1942 at Fort McIntosh, Texas as his place of entry into service. His official military occupational specialty in the Fifth Air Force was Radio Mechanic 754 based on his results of a battery of mechanical and radio aptitude tests. Soon he was off to his training at Army Air Force (AAF) Scott Field, Illinois, which was considered the primary training ground for all radio operators, radio mechanics and gunners, positions determined under very stringent qualifications. Men with superior qualifications were needed for the combat crew training programs and even in recent years, he often spoke of his "Crew in my Fifth Air Force" (1942-1945). Angel held dear the knowledge he gained in crew training, including never forgetting Morse Code, and especially his Radio Mechanic Diploma issued to him on 28 Nov 1942, always proud to say he had all his original military papers in his personal file! Ever the proud patriot! The stories our family and friends heard! From eating "K" rations to almost drowning in the jeep accidentally driven into the river so the men could bathe. He was expedited to frequently changing locations by flying ahead of the crew traveling by boat as an essential and indispensable crew member to repair returning planes, if they made it back, and resting while sleeping under his airplane at night so the crew would be better prepared to move planes if the Japanese bombed. His WWII history and memories being varied and expansive were only recanted in

most recent years by Angel, as is so true of combat veterans. Everyone knew they would be lucky enough to hear the story again and never tired of those memories he shared. He received his Honorable Discharge certificate on 22 October 1945 (3 years 2 months service) at Fort Bliss, Texas as a Technical Sergeant in the 345th Bomb Group Squadron 499, better known as the "Bats Out of Hell." Angel's service qualified him for four bronze service stars and a silver service star (different from the individual Bronze and Silver Star medals), which were awarded for the following campaigns: The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Citation and Honorable Service Lapel Button World War II. Angel was presented these medals at the age of 94, seven decades after the end of WWII, at the federal building in Hemisfair, San Antonio, Texas, on May 8, 2017 by the honorable U.S. Representative Joaquin Castro of Texas District 20. These medals were never retrieved by Angel because after the war, responding to a Red Cross call from his only sister, Blanca, he purchased a car in the middle of the night and drove non-stop, like a "Bat Out of Hell", from Port of Oakland, CA to Laredo to care for his ailing mother. However late those medals were, when presented in their honorary box, Angel said he would always keep them "near my heart." Angel loved to wear his cap and other clothing proclaiming he was a WWII Veteran. Ever the proud patriot! Returning to his hometown of Laredo to care for his dear mother, Macaria, Angel opened his own Sinclair auto service station, Cruz Garage at 3403 San Bernardo Ave. These sentimental memories from 1945-1950 came more freely than his WWII stories as he spoke of days owning his garage and purchasing a home that he fully furnished on a huge family plot of land near his parents and brother. Angel was busy preparing for his life ahead! His driving force was caring for his parents, his family and anyone else that came across his path. Often he serviced vehicles at no charge or customers bartered for services, and like his father before him, did whatever he could to help those in need, including saving the wife of a stranger from being beaten

in the street by her husband, who later presented gifts of gratitude to Angel for having the courage to stop him. We heard funny stories of all the girlfriends he had, but never any names. Then one George Washington Birthday celebration in February 1946, across from the San Agustin Cathedral, in the main plaza in downtown Laredo, he laid eyes on his future wife as the men and women circled around the park promenade-style. As the women walked in one direction and the men in the opposite direction, their encounter and forever love story began. Soon the girlfriends of Josefina Chapa pointed out to her the very handsome, young man standing under a huge near-by tree who was staring in her direction. The rest is history, as they say. A whirlwind of love began and his very handsome face with a movie star look soon appeared in a picture on her dresser, causing her stern father to question who this good-looking fellow was. With a twinkle in her eye, Josefina replied to her father "oh, just a movie star I like". Angel proposed and Josefina accepted and they married November 30, 1947. Eventually, after the birth of their third child, he closed his garage about 1952 and went to work for H.B. Zachry in Laredo to provide a more prosperous life for his family.

Here begins his storied career at Zachry company, for whom Angel traveled all over the United States and even overseas. He again served a very important roll in ensuring the gigantic equipment that laid highways and airport runways were in excellent condition. Once again he moved from location to location over the many years initially taking his young family but much more often later going alone to places such as Alamogordo, NM, and Texas cities like Amarillo/Pampa, Austin, Borger, Dallas, Granger, Houston and San Antonio, and overseas to Amman, Jordan. Settling his family in San Antonio, he purchased a home in 1960, and thereafter he sacrificed coming home every night to his family for their security. With the exception of the rare San Antonio assignment, such as Hemisfair Park and the former Kelly Field, Angel traveled on his own to each work assignment and returned to his home sometimes for only one or two weekend days. That was a difficult time, but Josefina kept their home running as smoothly as possible while Angel worked away from

home. Some summers Josefina would join him for a few weeks. This separation was a sacrifice they agreed to make together for the sake of their children who previously moved from school to school year after year, similar to a military family. They did this until his retirement in 1987. Forever the loyalist, Angel accompanied by Josefina continued to tremendously enjoy attending many Zachry events, especially those by the 25 Anniversary Club. There are many joyful and happy pictures of the couple dancing at these events. In between gatherings, Angel enjoyed catching up with Zachry friends and activities reading the monthly company newsletter he received at home. Life slowed a bit after retirement, but very likely were some of Angel's most happiest years finally spent by Josefina's side. With several grandchildren and eventually great grandchildren, home life was filled with school drop-offs and pick-ups for several of them. Never shirking a rescue request, never hesitating to say yes, he soon began to ride more frequently to the rescue in his big blue Zachry truck, which he so proudly kept after retirement that was filled with all his tools and gadgets. His workshop expanded and he began tinkering and inventing, and creating art at home. Up went a carport and a backyard swing for the children and oh so many loving repairs made to the home and fixing vehicles everywhere for so many. He loved creating objects to put in his beloved yard that he called his living room. Sitting on the glider by the fence with one arm up on its back, he would lovingly look around and watch the birds and squirrels and admire his handiwork. His green thumb abounded and many, many potted plants and trees cropped up. He was joined by many who would engage in lively conversations with him, including his four legged pets. One such pet, who he called Peeber, passed and he swore he would never have another dog, but then came Blackie, who is now mourning his departure. Until one or two years ago, Angel was cutting his own yard and climbing up on the roof to clear leaves. Several times neighbors would offer to cut his grass but he loved the exercise. His response was he had to keep moving or he would pass away, but his knees gave out. Angel went from a walker to a red motor chair provided by the VA. On May 11, 2020 he suffered an unfortunate

accident and tipped over his motor chair into the street while maintaining his beautiful yard. A hospital stay, rehabilitation and therapies at home never helped Angel return to his previous mobility, and as he said, he had to keep moving, which became increasingly more difficult for him. Angel soon began to lament his bad knees which caused his inability to walk and he often dreamed of running again. His cardiologist proclaimed his heart was strong and beating well, but Angel was confined. It saddened him deeply, because he felt he had to keep moving. His dream of running again became more frequent.

Angel's family cherishes every one of his stories and especially their own individual memories of a member of the Greatest Generation, their father, grandfather and great grandfather. One such memory is from his oldest daughter who often heard his loving story told with laughter and a huge smile on his face of her as a baby learning to walk, and while toddling around his Cruz Garage picked up a big screw and threw it in a pail of oil, splashing her mother at the same moment she ran to pick her up. Her partner's sentimental recollection is a conversation about a call Angel placed soon after their honeymoon to his wife's work and quietly resigned her job at SWBT for her without her knowledge. His middle daughter reminisces over her excitement upon hearing of his return home in his big blue Zachry truck, in awe of what she felt was his adventurous life of travel, yet worried for his safety and hoped for his last trip away. A son-in-law tells of sitting around the dining table with many family members and Angel in his usual spot sharing his many WWII memories and tales of adventure everywhere he went. His youngest daughter remembers he proudly surprised her with her firstborn's nursery bedding that she has still kept 39 years later. Another son-in-law felt he received the greatest gift anyone could give another, and that was to believe in him. His grandson will never forget some of his best childhood times were of the summers he spent visiting Grandpa in Pampa, Texas near Amarillo, which included his first plane rides where he got a tour of the plane, joyfully riding in

Grandpa's big blue Zachry truck to inspect equipment and property, playing with the many farm animals, running free in the nearby fields, and oh so many more adventures! His granddaughter-in-law recalls his love of rebuilding items, resulting in his work taking on a new repurposed life. One granddaughter for whom he had daily school duty recalls Grandpa was always the first parent guardian at school every day arriving in the big blue 1979 Chevrolet Caprice Classic. Grandpa was always the first car parked at the school entrance stairs and no one ever beat him to that spot. Angel was reliable as the sun, moon and stars. The work Angel did to beautify his home and yard has been an inspiration to all. His granddaughter's fiancé is following Angel's footsteps using found bits and pieces sometimes broken then repaired or repainted into creative art pieces all the while planting trees, shrubs and flowers at their own home. His great granddaughters recall and cherish memories of sitting with Popo at the table or outside in the backyard enjoying the swing he built so they could swing together to enjoy nature in pure joy and love. Hearing Popo tell and retell his stories recanting details took one granddaughter back to that particular moment in time and now reinforces why she feels she has become a good storyteller and writer. Another who relishes to this day eating pecans remembers how she sat with him in his backyard while he would use a hammer to crack pecans then handing her the plump pecan meat. When for their safety, he built his own nutcracker with pieces of boards, a few springs and a couple of bolts and then made her a special nutcracker of her very own. Another granddaughter who Grandpa would take to and from school as well remembers he was there everyday early always waiting for her to walk to their big blue 1979 Chevrolet Caprice Classic, then helping with math homework at home. A grandson-in-law tells how he first met his wife's grandfather and soon learned he would hear stories and often heard them again, but realized that was how Angel connected with others by sharing his own life story. Grandpa's great grandsons enjoy discovering the things in his backyard that he built and are amazed by his creativity, and have loving remembrance of his concern for them to not get hurt. Angel loved to tell his life

story and often said he was “history” and even in his final days, his doctor while speaking to his eldest shared with her Angel told him of all the places in his 98+ year lifetime that he had traveled to all over the world. Angel truly was a member of The Greatest Generation!

Preceded in death by his parents and five siblings, as the last remaining child of six from the Maximo and Macaria union, as well as loved four-legged Scruffy and Peeber and countless other furies. He is survived by Josefina Chapa Cruz, his treasured wife who he so lovingly cared and is now protected by their adoring pet, Blackie. Also survived by four children: daughter Sylvia Cruz and partner Jerry Shaw, daughter Norma Gonzales and husband Joe Gonzales, son Angel A Cruz, Jr., and daughter Hilda Ramirez and husband Andrew Ramirez. Grandchildren: Aaron Viagran and wife Carol Viagran, Crystal Viagran and fiancé Pancho Walker, Tyler Ashbaugh and partner Tatiana, Leah Greentree and husband James Greentree, Marissa Fernandez and husband Zack Fernandez, Veronica Ramirez, Andrew Ramirez and partner Nicole Ortiz. Great grandchildren Sophia Nichole, Isabella Rose, Gabriella Frances, Davina Rose, Cody, Chevy and Nicole, Sierra, Zaiden, Ethan, Aysia, Marcelo, and Andrew. Great great grandchildren Brenleigh, Scarlett, Cara, and Hazel. In addition, his sisters-in-law Gloria H. Gutierrez and Dorothy N. Cruz, along with numerous nieces, nephews and cousins; lifelong special friends; and ALL who made rescue calls to him for help. Respected and loved by all.

For everyone's safety, private services are for immediate family only. A procession led by the Patriot Guard Riders will leave Mission Park South for Angel's last trip by his home, followed by a full military honors ceremony at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. There is limited capacity at the Fort Sam Pavilion. However, if anyone would like to honor Angel's memory at the cemetery, please be present at 1:00 pm approximately to join and follow the funeral procession to Fort Sam. Pallbearers: Jerry, Joe, Andrew, Aaron, Pancho, Zack, Tyler, and Andrew. In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution in his honor to help other brave soldiers through the Wounded

Warrior Project, PO Box 758516, Topeka, KS 66675. You can also make a donation to a charity of your choice. The family is very appreciative for all the words of comfort and expressions of sympathy and concern from family and friends. They are grateful for the care and support he received from his doctors and nurses for his home healthcare, especially Wound Care Nurse Paul, and during his final days at Metropolitan Methodist Hospital, as well as Comfort Care Transportation for the careful drivers who drove Angel to appointments and returned him safely. We will forever hold dear in our heart a loving memory of our husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and a blessing to all.

Previous Events

Rosary and Service

DEC 2. 11:30 AM (CT)

Mission Park Funeral Chapels South, Cemeteries & Crematories
1700 SE Military Dr
San Antonio, TX 78214
(210) 924-4242
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Interment

DEC 2. 1:45 PM (CT)

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery
1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Tribute Wall

MA

“ We miss you Grandpa ❤️❤️



Marissa - November 30, 2020 at 09:02 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Angel A. Cruz.



November 30, 2020 at 04:55 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Angel A. Cruz.



November 30, 2020 at 02:28 PM



“ *Happy 73 Wedding Anniversary in Heaven! We miss you daddy!*



Hilda Ramirez - November 30, 2020 at 11:28 AM

ND

This photo was in my parents' living room...so beautiful! There is so much to say about my beloved Tio Angel and I could never express it as well as it should be said. I too have so many years of memories and life with this incredible family. I feel very fortunate and honored to be related to them. He will live in our hearts forever as a symbol of strength of character and loyalty and above all, love that he gave all his family. Rest in peace and in God's Arms, sweet Tio Angel. We will miss you.

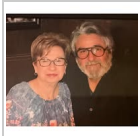
Natalie Dowd - November 30, 2020 at 05:26 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Angel A. Cruz.*



November 27, 2020 at 08:41 PM



“ *Our family*



Hilda Ramirez - November 27, 2020 at 06:17 PM



“ *Dad with his siblings (Maximo, Blanca, Dad, Carlos, Jose & Abel)*



Hilda Ramirez - November 27, 2020 at 06:14 PM

MC

Our beloved family, all together. They touched and left their footprint and legacy forever in generations. Love always and forever ❤️ Eric, Melanie & Lauren Cruz. (Abel's son's family)

Melanie Cruz - November 28, 2020 at 01:11 AM



“ *Dad receiving his wartime medals 70 years later*



Hilda Ramirez - November 27, 2020 at 05:59 PM



“ *Dad's wartime photos*



Hilda Ramirez - November 27, 2020 at 05:56 PM