



## Donald Wilmoth Smith

August 14, 1922 - October 7, 2016

He was our East, our West, our North, and our South. When we lost our directions, our compasses led back to him. What he believed and expected, and how he lived were the constants in our lives. He told us to remember who we are and remember where we came from. In our heads we knew someday he would be gone, but our hearts believed he would live forever. And now, we are on our own, the compass hands' spinning in our hearts.

Donald Wilmoth Smith, a fifth generation Texan, was born on August 14, 1922 to Van Calvin Smith and Ivah Harvick Smith. His immediate family included older brother, Van Harvick Smith (1913-1992) and Ruth Jean "Bitsy" Smith (1924-2009). He attended Rice University for two years and then enlisted in the United States Marines. Trained as a pilot, Donald W. Smith was assigned to the Pacific front and served at Guadalcanal and in the Solomon Islands Campaign. During this time, Donald had the first major miracle in his military career. While bombing Rabul Island, his plane was shot down and he made a water landing. Luckily, a Navy flying boat picked up the crew before captured by the Japanese. Taken back to Green Island, Donald Smith continued flying in the Solomon Island Campaign. In 1943, Donald rotated to California, New Orleans, Iowa, and finally Hawaii as an instructor teaching Marine pilots. Donald was on an air craft carrier heading to the Marianas when the bomb was dropped and the armistice took place. Following World War II, in 1945, Donald received a telegram that he was placed in the active reserves. He

returned to The University of Texas in Austin and met a lovely secretary named Sophie Katherine Hodges.

On April 25, 1950, Don and Sophie Katherine “Katie” Hodges were married in Austin at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary Chapel. They were married three months when the Korean War began. In August 1950, Donald received greetings from President Harry S. Truman to return to duty. Donald entered the Korean War as a Captain and then a Major in the Marine Reserve Squadron. While patrolling in North Korea, a Chinese shell tore through the plane and hit a 40 mm shell, missing the primer on the back. Although the plane was crippled, Donald kept flying and brought the plane to safety. This is the second major miracle in his military career. Donald served in the Marine Reserves from 1942 to 1971 and retired after 29 years as a Major.

Although Donald was a veteran of two major wars and received many medals for bravery in aviation, Don always said “I did nothing heroic.” War statistics show more US servicemen died while flying planes than any other branches. While completing the 30 required missions, the airman’s chances of being killed was 71%. Putting your life on the line through two wars, and having his planes shot down twice makes Donald Wilmoth Smith one of the “Greatest Generation”, a patriot who rose to the occasion when his country needed him.

Donald Wilmoth Smith was a civil engineer. He worked for H.B. Zachary Construction Company and served as the personal pilot for H.B. Zachary for many years. In 1959, Donald took his family to Kwajalein Marshall Islands. Working for Pacific Martin Zachary, Donald was instrumental in building the Nike Zeus Missile Defense system around the Pacific Rim. In 1965, the family returned to San Antonio, Texas. While Katie held down the home front, Donald worked for H.B. Zachary Construction Company traveling to Central America, South America, Africa, and the Middle East building roads over mountains and through jungles, erecting dams on rivers, and building oil refineries in the

deserts. He told stories of meeting with warlords in Malawi, Africa, eating dinner with sheiks in Saudi Arabia, and once believing he was being kidnapped doing his “tuck, drop, and roll out of a taxi.”

Donald W. Smith was a devoted husband and father. His five children were Donna Kay (1952-2016), Nona Jo (1953), Lizanne (1957), Kern Stone (1958) and Suzette (1965). He was married to Katie for 47 years and missed his “Missy” until the day he died. “Boyfriend” and “Girlfriend” are now in Heaven dancing to Moon River. Until 2013, Donald lived in the house in Castle Hills that Katie and he designed and built in 1958. Donald W. Smith was a grandfather to seven grandchildren. Donald was an active member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Castle Hills. He was a member of the Men’s Bible Class and sang in the Choir. He was an ardent member of the Longhorn Nation and referred to himself as an Aggies worst nightmare.

At this time, words of gratitude do not adequately express the family’s heartfelt thanks for all the people who walked with him in these final years. From the neighborhood friends who kept a watchful eye on his comings and goings, to his church family at Covenant Presbyterian, to the patient and caring ladies at Arden Court Memory Care, and finally to the compassionate workers at Eagle Trace in Houston, he could not have made it to 94 without you walking beside him.

Funeral arrangements are by Mission Park Funeral Home. Burial with military honors will be Monday, October 24 at 2:00 pm at Mission Park North Cemetery at 20900 IH 10 West with a memorial service at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 211 Roletto Drive at 3:00 pm. A light reception will follow. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to your favorite charity in Donald W. Smith name.

## HIGH FLIGHT BY JOHN MAGEE

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunwards I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds—and done a thousand things  
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air,  
Up, up the long delirious burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,  
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew;  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

OCT **24**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Funeral Chapels and Cemetery Dominion

20900 IH 10 W

San Antonio, TX 78257

(210) 698-5252

<https://www.missionparks.com/>

# Tribute Wall

WC

“ I am a daily reader of the Obituaries, as well as a 89 year old retired Engineer from the Univ. of Texas with a BSME in 1950. When I saw Donald went to UT, I got my 1950 Cactus and looked up his name. I found 6-7 locations in the Cactus, finding Donald as a Varsity man on the football team as well as many locations in Intermural Athletics. I could tell from the places where he was the Manager or Pres. that he was a leader. I regret that we never crossed paths, I would liked to have known him.

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**William Crook** - October 20, 2016 at 06:58 PM