



## Richard Charles Leyda

April 8, 1918 - November 28, 2016

Richard Charles Leyda, Colonel USAF (Retired), went to be with his Lord on November 28, 2016. He was born April 8, 1918 in Buffalo, New York, to Frederick Emerson and Esther Armstrong Leyda. From a young age, Richard worked alongside his father in the Leyda Printing & Stationery Company, publisher of the Erie County Herald of Blasdell, New York. Upon graduation from high school, he continued in the family business, was a member of the volunteer fire department, and played on the local semi-pro tackle football team. He entered military service in 1941 and was initially assigned to the Fifth U.S. Cavalry, Fort Bliss, Texas, where he trained on horseback with one of the last mounted units utilized for military engagement. In 1942 he transferred to the Army Air Corps and began primary flight training at Hicks Field in Ft. Worth. He achieved his pilot rating and received his commission as a second lieutenant at Lubbock Army Air Field in 1943. He then served as an instructor pilot at Hondo Navigation Training School, flying a variety of trainer aircraft, including the specially-modified Beechcraft AT-7, preparing many navigators for overseas duty in World War II. During this time he met his future wife, Mabel Bryant. They were married at Travis Park Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas, on April 8, 1944—his birthday, chosen to make sure he would never forget his anniversary. They had their first daughter in May of 1945, and in June he transitioned to Frederick Army Airfield in Oklahoma where he trained as a pilot in the Martin B-26 Marauder bomber. Upon his discharge from active duty at the end of the war, they returned to Blasdell,

New York, where he rejoined the family printing company. During a seven-year period, they had three children, two sons and a daughter. Richard also worked as a private pilot instructor and flew with the Air National Guard of Niagara Falls, New York.

Returning to San Antonio in 1953, Richard continued in the printing trade at the San Antonio Light newspaper and other local companies, with a variety of duties including shop foreman. He joined the Air Force Reserve in 1954, as a member of the 2851st AB Wing at Kelly AFB, where he flew C-47 aircraft and later, C-119's. In 1961, he joined the 433rd Troop Carrier Wing, also known as the Alamo Wing. In 1964, he was appointed Tactical Squadron Commander and in 1967 became commander of the 921st Military Airlift Group. Over 700 flying and support personnel in nine units were under his command. In January 1968, he was called to active duty following the U.S.S. Pueblo crisis. The unit flew transport missions to Southeast Asia and Europe. Under his leadership the group was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation. In June of 1969 the group returned to ready reserve at Kelly AFB. In December 1969 he attended ceremonies at the Pentagon and the White House in Washington D.C. honoring commanders from U.S. Armed Forces reserve units activated during this crisis. Later in his command, he was promoted to the rank of colonel, and the group transitioned from the C-124 Globemaster to the C-130 Hercules aircraft. He completed a number of military service schools, including the Air War College, and was the recipient of the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Air Force Legion of Merit. He continued his group command until he transferred to the USAF Retired Reserve in June 1973. His flying career spanned 32 years, during which he logged over 6000 flight hours.

During his retirement years Richard was actively involved in community work donating many hours of volunteer time to the San Antonio Conservation Society, the Institute of Texan Cultures, and VITA (Volunteer Income Tax

Assistance Program). He was a teacher for adult Bible study and a devoted member of University Baptist Church. Richard maintained his support of America's military through membership in the Military Officers Association of America, Reserve Officers Association of the U.S., and the Order of Daedalians. Richard and Mabel enjoyed travel to Europe, the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, Hawaii, and Alaska.

He was preceded in death by wife Mabel Bryant Leyda, daughter Nancy Kathryn Heavin, son David Charles Leyda, his parents, four sisters, Margaret Battleson, Esther Bink, Jean Velott, and Catherine Martin, and a brother, Fred Leyda; and survived by two brothers, Arthur Leyda, and George Leyda and his wife Betty Jo.

He is also survived by son Dr. Richard James Leyda and wife Ellen, granddaughter Laura Elizabeth Leyda, granddaughter Lisa Marie Petersen and husband Benjamin, and great-grandson Zanden Guy Petersen. Also surviving him are daughter Elizabeth Ann Sherrod and husband James, granddaughter Jennifer DeAngelis and husband Christopher, and great-granddaughter Madison Elizabeth DeAngelis.

Richard had a very deep and devoted personal faith in his Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ and enjoyed regularly studying the Scriptures. He was greatly loved and respected by his family and friends, who look forward to a happy reunion with him in the presence of our Lord.

The funeral service will be held at University Baptist Church, 6465 Babcock Road on Tuesday, December 6th, with the Rev. Randy Bales officiating. The family will receive guests at 10 a.m. with a service following at 11 a.m. Interment will take place at Mission Park North. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the "Richard Charles and Mabel Bryant Leyda UBC

Scholarship Fund”, care of HighGround Advisors, 1601 Elm Street Suite 1700,  
Dallas, TX 75201-7241.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC 6. 11:00 AM (CT)

University Baptist Church  
6465 Babcock Road  
San Antonio, TX  
<http://ubcsa.org>

# Tribute Wall

GB

“ *I never knew Mr. Leyda, but knew of him through Betty's devotion to him. It has been my privilege to have worked with her and can see who he was by the influence he had on her. My heart goes out to Betty and the entire family.*  
*Love always, GReg Barnes*

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**Greg Barnes** - December 02, 2016 at 02:00 PM