



Robert Joseph Betz

September 18, 1924 - January 11, 2018

Robert Joseph Betz went home to the Lord on January 11, 2018. His life, in many ways, was defined by his service during World War II and by his commitment to God.

He was born in Sioux City, Iowa on September 19, 1924. He was raised as a devout Catholic. As he graduated from Trinity High School in 1943, the United States was in the midst of World War II.

He enlisted in the United States Navy and was then transferred to the Marines (which were part of the Navy at that time).

At the Battle of Peleliu, where 3,000 Americans died, he earned his 1st Purple Heart Medal. He was shot through the knee on his 20th birthday during jungle combat. After the island was secured, he proudly stood at Honor Guard on the beach while hundreds of his fellow servicemen were taken off the island after being killed in combat.

The First Marine Division (7th Marines, 2nd Battalion), to which he was attached, was awarded their 1st Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism at the Battle of Peleliu.

On April 1, 1945, as the Marines were preparing to land for the Battle of

Okinawa where 20,000 Americans would be killed in action, he asked God to watch over him and promised to give thanks everyday if he survived.

On April 12, 1945, he was engaged in a jungle battle alongside 289 Marines. Of those 289 men, only 11 survived. After he captured 3 Japanese soldiers, he was shot for the second time during this jungle fight (this time through the arm). It was there that he earned his 2nd Purple Heart Medal.

The very next day, on April 13, 1945, he returned to battle against the Japanese and was shot for the third time (in his back, shoulder, and leg). He was awarded a Silver Star Medal for his bravery. Of the medical corpsman tasked to provide first aid that day, he was the only survivor.

For his heroism that day, the Silver Star Medal citation in the name of the President of the United States and the U.S. Marine Corps states "that while pinned down by heavy Japanese machine gun fire, and without regard to his own safety, Robert Joseph Betz ran from man to man, exposing himself to constant enemy fire, rendering first aid to the wounded and though shot and badly wounded himself, he refused to be evacuated and continued to provide aid to others until orders were given that he receive treatment."

The First Marine Division (7th Marines, 2nd Battalion) to which he was attached was awarded their 2nd Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism at the Battle of Okinawa.

As he was recovering, he reflected on how he had survived being shot 3 different times and on the thousands of his fellow servicemen who did not. He viewed this as nothing short of a miracle and deeply felt that God had indeed watched over him.

When his health was restored, and for the next 70 years, he fulfilled his

promise to God by finding a Catholic Church and attending Mass every day in whatever city he was located around the world.

After World War II ended, he began working for the U.S. Government as an OSHA Safety Inspector in Iowa, South Dakota, New Jersey, Texas, and Colorado.

During these early years after the War, he played 7 seasons of Minor League baseball where he finished with a .302 batting average and 40 home runs.

Later, while still working with the U.S. Government, he was offered the opportunity to work in France as part of the U.S. Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe. He lived in the Bordeaux Region and it was there that he found a love he would carry with him for the rest of his life...red wine.

He then went to work for Martin Marietta as a Safety Inspector in their Aerospace Division.

He ultimately settled in Colorado and lived there until he turned 90. At that point, he and his wife relocated to her hometown in San Antonio where they could be watched over by their nieces and nephews in Texas.

After he turned 90, he was not physically able to attend Mass each day. So, he spent the remaining 3 years of his life attending Mass on Sundays and watching Mass on television from the comfort of his recliner the remaining days of the week. He did this at the same time and on the same channel each day (with his rosary in hand).

And on April 1st of each year beginning in 1946 and until he was the lone remaining member, he would spend the day calling each of the Marines who

survived the jungle encounters he had on April 12-13, 1945. He chose April 1 because that was the day the Marines landed on Okinawa and the day he asked God to watch over him.

He was married to his first wife, Claudia, from 1945 until 1971. He met her while in high school and she waited for him until he returned from the War.

He was married to Alicia C. Betz from 1991 until his death and they spent many years traveling around the United States on vacation and visiting with family and friends.

He is survived by his wife, Alicia C. Betz, as well as numerous nieces and nephews both in Iowa and Texas.

He is pre-deceased by his parents, Robert and Emily Betz of Sioux City, Iowa and by his two brothers, William Betz and Richard Betz, also of Sioux City, Iowa.

Because of the magnitude of his service to the United States, his final place of rest will be at Arlington National Cemetery just outside Washington, D.C.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA

Previous Events

Viewing

JAN 19. 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Life Center at Stone Oak
23755 US-281
San Antonio, TX 78258
(210) 576-3377
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Rosary

JAN 19. 7:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Life Center at Stone Oak
23755 US-281
San Antonio, TX 78258
(210) 576-3377
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Holy Mass

JAN **20**. 1:00 PM (CT)

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
20523 Huebner Rd.
San Antonio, TX 78258

Tribute Wall



“ *Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemeteries created a Tribute Video in memory of Robert Joseph Betz*



Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemetery - January 18, 2018 at 10:39 AM

JG

“ *John A. Guerra and Celia Garcia purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Robert Joseph Betz.*



John A. Guerra and Celia Garcia - January 19, 2018 at 06:12 PM

BT

“ *Bob and Andi Thompson purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Robert Joseph Betz.*



Bob and Andi Thompson - January 18, 2018 at 07:05 PM

DW

“ Bob's parents & brothers, Bill & Richard were neighbors of my parents & siblings in the 1940s & early 50s on Main St. in Sioux City, IA. Bob was in the service so didn't meet him until years later when I saw him @ Cathedral of the Epiphany @ a weekday Mass, when he was visiting a cousin, Mary Elaine O'Hara. She was a friend of mine & he kept in contact with me as her health declined over the years. He & Alicia & I maintained contact after Mary Elaine's death a few years ago. He was a man of strong faith & I shall not forget him. He graduated from Trinity High School on the grounds of which is a Diocesan Catholic Shrine, Trinity Heights Queen of Peace, which began in 1992 with the arrival of a 30ft tall stainless steel statue of Our Lady Queen of Peace. There is a Veterans Memorial area with a plaque honoring his military service in WW II. May he rest in peace in eternal life. Dianne Winkel

Dianne Winkel - January 17, 2018 at 05:59 PM

RA

“ I met Robert during weekday mass and we became friends immediately. 12:05 Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sundays. In common we had Catholics at birth, Marine and the love of aviation. We always chatted before mass and I'd walk out with him if I wasn't too slow. One day before mass he decided to breach a bunker, from then on when we were at the same mass I finally caught up with him. Another day he reached out grabbed my hand and gave me a miniature Purple Heart, yes we shared that also. I fell in love with the man, his Faith his spirit. It saddens me I was not able to see him as of late but I always remembered Robert in my prayers and looked for him at mass. God Bless you MARINE, Semper FI! To the family my prayers and respect.
Richard J Alvarado

Richard Alvarado - January 15, 2018 at 08:01 PM

AM

“ *Uncle Bob was truly a man of service to his country. It may be cliché, however he epitomizes the greatest generation. We were blessed to have him share his faith and his commitment to our flag and what it stood for with our grandchildren. Aunt Alicia’s commitment to him is a testament to the values of family and faith we all strive to live. Our deepest prayers and condolences. May perpetual light shine upon him.*

Abby Campos Montoya - January 14, 2018 at 09:32 PM