



Major Russell C. Van Hellen (USAF, Ret.)

April 20, 1922 - July 30, 2020

Major Russell C. Van Hellen, Jr. (USAF, Ret.) joined his Lord on July 30, 2020 in San Antonio, Texas. He was born on April 20, 1922 in Grand Rapids, Michigan to Russell C. Van Hellen, Sr. and Ellen Jacobson. His mother died when he was very young and he was raised by his stepmother, Hazel Elizabeth. He graduated from Arthur Hill High School in Saginaw, Michigan. Russ married his sweetheart, Elizabeth (Betty) Fabian on July 31, 1943 in Moorhead, Minnesota. Major Russell C. Van Hellen joined the Army Air Corp in July 1940, as an air cadet, later the U.S. Air Force and served for over 23 years. After Air Force retirement, he flew as a crop duster in West Texas until he walked away from a two wheel landing when a wheel fell off while making a pass. He then flew with Air America for 10 years in Southeast Asia, primarily in Thailand and Laos. Russ flew some of the Air America aircraft out of the country when Saigon fell, to keep them from falling into communist hands. During his flying career, he was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters and other decorations of WWII, Japanese Occupation, Korean War and United Nations Service Medals. After WWII, he joined the Saginaw, Michigan Police Department. When the Korean War began he was recalled to fly F-51'S and F-86'S in Korea. Continuing his service in the Air Force, the family spent time at various air bases in the U.S. and Phillipine Islands. His last Air Force assignment was in flight test at Kelly AFB in San Antonio, flying F-102'S and B-52's. In earlier years, Russ loved to hunt, ride horses and learned to scuba dive in Okinawa and the Phillipines. He

pushed his grandsons to their limits riding mountain bikes in his 60's and 70's. In later years, Russ and Betty enjoyed their cottage in the summers and early fall on the lake near Lake City, Michigan. But most of all he loved to fly. In the late 1940's, Russ and Betty flew his Stearman Biplane from San Marcos to Otter Tail County, Minnesota, with their 2 year old son strapped to Betty's lap in the back seat, making several fuel and diaper stops. God took care of Russ and his family thru his many, many assignments from Georgia to Laos and many points in between. Now he has been called home for his final assignment, perhaps looping and rolling that Stearman Biplane with Betty in the backseat. Russ has made his final flight going west, into the sunset, just as the day ends and all is quiet, except for the fading sound of a lone aircraft. He loved his family, he loved to fly and he loved his country and freedom. Rest in peace Major, Husband, Father, Uncle and Grandpa. Well done, good and faithful servant. Mr. Van Hellen was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 63 years, Betty Van Hellen; his daughter, Marcia Jean Hierholzer his granddaughter, Kimberly Lister Hierholzer; and sister, Betty Carroll. He is survived by his sons, Russ W. Van Hellen (Kaylene) and Richard Van Hellen (Brenda); grandchildren, Russell J. Van Hellen (Lynne), Amy Knight (Jesse), Ryan D. Van Hellen (Summer), John Hierholzer (Jennifer), Allen Van Hellen (Toko), Matthew Van Hellen and Grant Lister; great-grandchildren, Russell C. Van Hellen, Julia Van Hellen, Noah Knight, Chloe Knight, Savannah Knight, Ryland Van Hellen, Adalynne Van Hellen, Justin Hierholzer, Jordan Hierholzer, Jake Hierholzer, Josh Hieholzer and Jenna Hierholzer.

SERVICES

Graveside Services will be held on Saturday, August 8, 2020 at 10:30am at Mission Burial Park North with U.S. Air Force Honors.

For personal acknowledgement, you may sign the online guestbook at www.missionparks.com in the Tributes section.

MISSION PARK FUNERAL CHAPELS NORTH

3401 CHERRY RIDGE DR.
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78230
(210) 349-1414

Cemetery Details

Mission Burial Park North

20900 IH 10 West
San Antonio, TX 78257

Previous Events

Graveside Service

AUG 8. 10:30 AM (CT)

Mission Burial Park North
20900 IH 10 West
San Antonio, TX 78257

Tribute Wall



“ I really loved hearing your jokes and your stories, over a couple of rum and cokes of course. I always enjoyed your version of “Happy Birthday” every year, too. Toko and I are so happy that you got to meet her at Christmastime a couple years ago, though we’re sad that you won’t get to meet your new great grandson, coming later this month. We’re also very sad that we can’t be there today to honor your life due to the travel restrictions, but we’re sure this message will get to you somehow, as you’re in our hearts. We love you.



Allen VH - August 08, 2020 at 08:43 AM



“ Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Major Russell C. Van Hellen (USAF, Ret.).



August 08, 2020 at 08:17 AM

TH

“ I have so many great and wonderful memories of Van and Betty. Over the years(from 1979 to just 3mts ago, our relationship grew from Van being my boss flying for a company doing government contracts , to my friend on and off the job and I'm proud to say my second Father and Betty my second mother throughout the years. As years passed and I left the company they were always as close as a phone call whether I was in Texas, California, Florida or passing through San Antonio. I knew him as Van , not Russ or Russell , that's how he introduced himself when I first interviewed for a pilots job in 1979. and he called me Tom or sometimes Tommy. Van and Betty came to my fathers funeral, in Kerrville, in 1991. When Russell called me last Saturday and told me that Van had passed it was 1991 again for me. Van and Betty were wonderful people and great second parents to me.

Thomas Hyde

Thomas Hyde - August 06, 2020 at 01:05 AM

DM

“ Darleen And Fred Mcclellan lit a candle in memory of Major Russell C. Van Hellen (USAF, Ret.)



Darleen and Fred Mcclellan - August 01, 2020 at 03:05 PM