

## Colonel Bruce Hilton, Jr.

1922 - 2013



Bruce Hilton, Jr. USAF (Ret)., passed peacefully at home in Austin, Texas among beloved family, on November 17, 2013.

The adventure he lived was as remarkable for its range as its impact. Bruce was born to hard-working parents in Wytheville, Virginia in January 1922. He engaged his farm chores with gusto before school and sought odd jobs after, as did many a farm lad in rural Virginia in those lean years. School taught him of the broader world beyond our borders and he was determined to fully engage it.

In 1940, he celebrated his high school graduation by going to Bolling Field and enlisting in the US Army, launching his amazing odyssey around America and the larger world. His career centered upon communications and enabled him to earn his degree.

He didn't merely experience some of the most important events of the 20th Century, he was one of the "Greatest Generation" who shaped our history. The evidence of an exceptional military career rests in a modest display case: three Battle Stars, two Legions of Merit, three Commendation Medals, a Meritorious Service Medal, and other recognition of his 34 years of loyal service.

His career excellence was also recently honored by the AACCS Alumni Association. The measure of this man's life and accomplishments extends well beyond service during three major wars and one very Cold War. Bruce was able to see more of America and the world than a young man on a farm might have imagined. In addition to numerous domestic assignments during the War, he served in England, France, Germany, and Brazil. After, he served throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and America.

Bruce lived to see the very maps of America and the world change as nations fell and arose. The span of his years saw America gain two stars on her flag. It included Stalin's rise to power and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Germany was broken up and reassembled. So was the phone company. He heard about Lucky Lindy's solo flight via radio and watched men land on the moon via television. He personally witnessed the inequity of Jim Crow laws and two elections of a President of mixed ethnic background.

When Bruce was born, the most frightening weapon people had invented was the tank. He lived to see an inconceivably vaster threat emerge and evolve into a dark cloud of uncertainty that covered our world for decades. He did his part to keep the worst from us.

He was no merely passive witness to history. As he worked to change the world for the better, so did the world change him. One cannot assist the survivors at Dachau and remain the same man. One cannot work with many people from beyond our borders without expanding one's own. One cannot learn all these and many other things without imparting them to others; this is why we will miss Bruce most of all.

Frugal but generous. Firm but fair. Serious but fun. Bruce never told his loved ones to be all of this, because he was all of this. He taught it by living it, by showing it, and by just doing it. He never hesitated to give his time to his church, his local Boy Scout troop, and others. He organized events for fellow Veterans. He spoke to many classrooms full of interested students, delivering riveting eyewitness accounts of events that had shaped their lives. Those school kids knew him as a talker.

His neighbors knew him as "The Walker." He was not a man idle in retirement. He stayed fit with long daily walks. He was an avid golfer and had played many of the world's most beautiful civil and military courses. He enjoyed being outdoors and working to improve his home and garden. His wisdom will live for generations. His kindness will radiate from those who knew him to those who never did.

Bruce is survived by his one and only bride of 66 years, Mildred "Tobe" Hilton, son Garland B. Hilton III, granddaughter Megan J. Hilton, and daughter-in-law Mary Hilton. The family would like to thank Dr. Aung and the staff at Texas Oncology in Cedar Park, the very kind people from Hospice Austin, and many others who have offered their help during this trying time. A celebration of Bruce's life was hosted on Saturday, December 7, 2013 in Austin, Texas .