

## Major Pleas M. "Pete" McKee



Friday, August 24, 2007

Major Pleas M. "Pete" McKee, USAF (Ret.), fondly known as Pete, 85, Tuesday, August 21, 2007, at his home in Abilene surrounded by family.

died

The son of Mildred (Williams) and Joe McKee, Pleas was born on March 22, 1922, in Rexroad, Oklahoma. After his father's death in 1930, his mother married Stephen U. "Spud" LeVally, who lovingly reared Pete. He married Annabet Sargent McKee on February 11, 1951. Together they moved to Abilene in 1969. He is remembered for his love for his dear wife and family, and for his service in the United States military.

Pete began his military career in October 1942, as a private in the United States Army Air Corps, and in April 1944, he became a lieutenant. During World War II, Lt. McKee served his first tour of duty overseas in the Southwest Pacific. As a captain his next tour was in France and Germany from November 1953 to July 1955. Upon his return from Germany in August, 1955, he joined a helicopter squadron, having first checked out in this type aircraft in 1948. As a captain, he attended the Industrial College of the Armed Forces from 1950 to 1951, and completed the Field Economic Mobilization Course, in the interest of national security. In September 1956, Pete was appointed a new Operations Officer. Being a senior pilot with more than 3,600 hours flying time, he joined the 50th Troop Carrier Squadron, also known as the Red Devils, in March of 1956.

Since entering the Air Force in 1942, Pete had piloted more than 25 different types of aircraft, among which were the B-17, B-26, B-29, H-19, H-21, C-47, P-51, P-40, C-46, C-54, C-119 and C-130.

Pete continued his education in 1959 as a graduate of Command and Staff College, through the Air University in Alabama. He also completed his training in Air Traffic Control in 1960 at the Federal Aviation Agency in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Major Pleas M. McKee retired with honor from Active Duty at Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Texas, on October 1, 1964. In May 1968, he completed the H H-53B/C Air Crew Ground School through the USAF.

Following Pete's retirement, he continued to work as "Pete's Hobby Shop" where he made name tags and rank insignias for the USAF service men. He also had "McKee's Sharpening Shop", and later refinished and upholstered furniture. He had a great love for wood and antiques, and was talented at whittling and making miniatures. He loved his half dolls, in which he took great pride. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge in Wynnewood, Oklahoma, as well as a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason.

He was a member of Elmwood West United Methodist Church. Pete was awarded the Cross of Military Service from the United Daughters of the Confederacy in March 1967. Some of his military decorations included the Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon, Army Occupation Japan, American Theatre Ribbon, American Defense, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, Air Medal, Northern Philippines Battle Star, Western Pacific Battle Star, New Guinea Battle Star and Air Force Commendation Medal.

On May 14, 1971, Pete received his Bachelor of Science in Education from Abilene Christian College. Though he never taught in the school system, he taught his seven children well through his love and example.

Pete was predeceased by his loving parents, his infant sister, Juanita, and his dear wife, Annabet.

He is survived by his children, Bess Lawrence and husband, Michael A., of Otway, North Carolina, Annabet Vestal of Yadkinville, North Carolina, Juanita Harrington and husband, Jim, of Cambridge, Ontario, Canada, Laura Weber and husband, Jim, of Abilene, Pleas Milton McKee, Jr. and wife, Debbie, of Campbell, Texas, Sylvia Forrester and husband, Mike, of Abilene, and Joe Frank Sargent McKee and wife, Kelly, of Sylva, North Carolina.

He is also survived by grandchildren, Sarah Elizabeth Vestal, Daniel Hampton Vestal, Shay O'Neil Petrone, Byron Elliot Petrone, Laura-Ann Nicole Weber, Joshua James McKee, Adrienne Leigh McKee, Benjamin Kiel Butler McKee, Cody Michael-Brandon Forrester, Cameron Joe McKee and Charlie Frank McKee.

The family wished to express heart-felt thanks to Ciria Tovar, a loving in-home care giver who never left his side, Hendrick Hospice and Dr. Carl Trusler.

"Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling, Daddy!"

Funeral services will be 10 a.m. Friday, August 24, at Elliott-Hamil Chapel of Faith, 5701 Hwy 277 South, officiated by the Rev. Robert Pelfrey. Interment will follow graveside rites with military honor in the Elliott-Hamil Garden of Memories Cemetery where he will be laid to rest with his dear wife, Annabet Sargent McKee, who predeceased him on August 16, 2006.

Military personnel, sons, sons-in-law and grandsons will serve as pallbearers.

Those who wish may make a memorial donation to the American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Association, or The Salvation Army in memory of our father.