

Raymond E.

KEY Jr.



Raymond Key joined his beloved wife Hazel in heaven Sunday, April 6, 2008. He succumbed to antibiotic resistant pneumonia after 17 days in ICU at the Veterans Hospital in Reno, NV. He had just returned from a trip to Texas to celebrate his 86th birthday with his brother and sisters. Ray was born in Clovis, New Mexico on March 20, 1922. His parents, originally from Texas, returned when Ray was two. He grew up in the small west Texas towns in Motley County, Eastmound, and Polar as a share croppers son. He helped with the family farming and was often unable to attend school regularly, but later obtained a GED in the military. His family eventually moved to Irion County in 1938 where his father became the County Clerk. During many of his teen years he further honed his good work ethic as a ranch hand on an uncle's ranch. At 18, he entered the CCC for 2 years. Upon leaving, he and his younger brother Richard attended the National Youth Administration Training School for sheet metal. In 1942, he enlisted in the Army Air Corp.

Ray became a bomber mechanic. When the Army Air Corp became the US Air Force, a new aircraft was making its entrance, the helicopter. A life long love affair started when he was trained as one of the first helicopter mechanics and he went to the factory to pick up the Air Force's first helicopters. He took great pride in being a helicopter crew chief and his excellent record for maintaining his aircraft. In 1949, he met and married his wife Hazel Montgomery of San Angelo, Texas. They were married for 55 years. During his 25 year Air Force career, he worked in air rescue and weather balloon launching and recovery. He was awarded the Air Medal for rescue efforts in the 1959 Tampico, Mexico flood where 20 people were rescued. He was stationed in Denver, Colorado, several air bases in Texas, spent two tours in Panama, and one tour at Ernest Harmon Air Force Base in Stephenville, Newfoundland before transferring to Stead Air Force Base, Reno, NV in 1964. He was one of the last men to be stationed at Stead and helped close the base before retiring as a Master Sgt. in 1967.

Of all of his assignments, he most enjoyed his five years at Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, Texas. He was living near his family in their home town, pursuing his career in helicopters, and was able to own and garden a one acre residence on the Concho River just a few miles from his work. On that one acre, some of the best cantaloupes, okra, tomatoes, and black eyed peas ever grown were produced in abundance and consumed by family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. After retirement, he remained in Reno with his family. He enjoyed boating and camping with friends and family at Lahaton Reservoir and Pyramid Lake. He and Hazel visited their homestead on the Concho River several times each year. These trips afforded opportunities to visit and care for their elderly parents. He was also an active RV'er who made several trips to Florida and around the country, as well as to Alaska. When Ray was 75 and Hazel 70 they took their first trip to Europe to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Over the next five years they made two more trips to the continent. After Hazel's passing, Ray moved to Classic Residence where he enjoyed the company and friendship of fellow residents.

He is survived by two daughters and their husbands, Katherine and John Bowling of Reno and Linda and Bob Davis of Oakland, California; and three grandchildren, Tim Bowling of Reno, and Janey and Alice Davis of Oakland. He also has a deceased son, Steven Key. He is survived by a brother, Richard Key, and three sisters, Melva Sellars, Jeanne McMinn, and Gerry Rowley, all of Texas, and many nieces and nephews. He attended the American Baptist Fellowship that met each Sunday at Classic Residence.

Services will be held at Reno Christian Fellowship at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, 2008, followed by graveside prayers at Mountain View Cemetery. Arrangements have been entrusted to Walton's Funeral Home in Reno.