



William Rawson (Bill) Gardner
March 31, 1926 to January 7, 2014

William R. (Bill) Gardner, 87, went to our Lord on January 7, 2014.

Born and raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Gardner entered the Army Air Force in 1944 with three years of machine shop experience at the age of 17. He trained at Airplane & Mechanic School-Keesler Field, Mississippi and Aerial Gunnery School in Harlingen, Texas and achieved the occupational specialty of Crew Chief (Aerial Engineer). He was Honorably Discharged in 1949 with the following honors: Bronze Battle Star for Germany Campaign, Air Medal, Campaign Ribbon, WWII Victory Medal and the American Theater Medal.

The GI Bill provided for Gardner, a high school dropout, an education at Texas A&I University in Kingsville where he earned a Bachelors Degree of Industrial Arts, a Teaching Certificate and a Master's of Education. There he met his wife, Betty Jane Coil.

Gardner moved his young family to Alice, TX in 1953 and was employed by Alice ISD for 32 years as a shop teacher and administrator. During the late 50's through the early 70's, the family owned and operated a summer business called The Ole' Swimmin' Hole and taught many in Alice to swim. They attended the Episcopal Church of the Advent.

Most of the furniture the family used was a hand made by Gardner. Constructing two Hush Guppy sailboats, he taught his children to sail on Mathis Lake at the "Alice Yacht Club". He was a professional photographer, did leather work and overall excellent craftsman. Other memorable family activities were traveling, camping and hunting.

Retiring to Weslaco, TX in 1995, he served the Lord faithfully at Grace Episcopal Church. Some major accomplishments of his retirement were: activity with the Experimental Aircraft Association, the reconstruction and test piloting of a wrecked Cessna and the construction (from scratch) and the testing of a Thorp T18.

Surviving are: wife of 62 years, Betty Gardner of Weslaco; four offspring, Linda Gardner (Carlson) of Edinburg, TX, William Kim (Bill) Gardner of Corpus Christi, TX, Kevin Gardner of Clear Water, FL and Laura Cyr of Tulsa, OK; 5 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

The Gardner Family would like to thank the following for their excellent care and support: Dr. Leticia Volpe, M.D., Rev. Richard Speer, IMS Home Health Care, Knapp Medical Center and Odyssey Hospice.

A memorial service celebrating Gardner's life will be held on Saturday, February 1, 2014 at 10:30 am at Grace Episcopal Church, 701 S. Missouri in Weslaco. He especially supported formative church camp experiences for youth. In lieu of flowers, please consider the Camp Scholarship Fund at Grace Episcopal Church or an organization of your choice.