



Virgil Dean Ferguson

June 26, 1926 - August 25, 2015

Virgil Dean Ferguson, age 89, of Valley Mills (formerly of Rockdale) passed away on August 25, 2015. Funeral service will be held 2 pm. Saturday, Aug. 29, 2015 at the Valley Mills First Baptist Church. Graveside service with military honors will be conducted Monday, August 31, at 11:00 am at the Gause Cemetery in Gause, TX. under the direction of Foss Funeral Home and Cremation Center.

Visitation will be 5 - 7 pm Friday at Foss Funeral Home.

Virgil Dean Ferguson was born June 26, 1926 in Palestine, TX. He attended school in Rockdale and Palestine, and graduated from Lamar HS in Houston in May, 1944 and immediately enlisted in the US Navy Reserve. He attended boot camp in San Diego, CA. Following boot camp, he married the love of his life on Sept. 5, 1944, while on leave. He was assigned to Basic Engineering School in Gulfport, MS and Fleet Diesel School in San Diego. He was assigned sea duty on destroyer escort DD-85 at Pearl Harbor, HI, which performed anti-submarine operations. At Eniwetok, he was transferred to the boat group of the USS Drew APA-162, where he manned a twin 30-caliber mount near the stern of a Higgins landing craft. While serving with the Drew, he participated in 5 island invasions, including Okinawa, and landed occupation troops on mainland Japan following VJ day.

Virgil was honorably discharged in May 1946 at Galveston, TX and immediately enrolled in the University of Houston. His first child (Dorothy

Virginia) was born 9 months after his naval discharge. He completed a 5 year degree program in 3-1/2 years and received his Mechanical Engineering degree in 1949.

Following college, he designed oil field equipment for Cameron Iron Works (Houston, TX) and Cardwell Manufacturing (Wichita, KS). In 1959, he accepted a position with Astrodyne division of Phillips Petroleum in McGregor, TX, where he designed rocket motors and rocket-related components for 25 years. Astrodyne was purchased by North American Aviation in 1960 and was renamed Rocketdyne. Virgil designed numerous rocket engines and rocket components throughout his career. Several of his designs are on display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, including the AIM-54 "Phoenix" missile engine, for which he was program manager, the gas generators for the F1 engines used in the moon shots, and the ascent engine for the Apollo Lunar Lander. He developed the early designs for the Solid Rocket Boosters (SRB) for the Space Shuttle that have since been adapted for use on the Titan rocket. Virgil retired from Rocketdyne in 1985. Virgil continued to consult in the rocket business for MBB in Germany and Raufoss in Norway for a number of years designing components for the Ariane V.

Virgil joined the Masonic Lodge of McGregor in 1964. He served as the Worshipful Master of the McGregor Lodge and Worthy Patron of the McGregor Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. He is a life member of the McGregor Lodge, Crawford Lodge, Valley Mills Lodge, Grand Lodge of Texas, and the Waco Scottish Rite (32d). He was a member of the Valley Mills Shriners (33d). He is a charter member of the Tranquility Base Lodge, which is reserved for masons that contributed to the moon missions (Buzz Aldrin, Worshipful Master).

Virgil was a life member of the American Legion in McGregor, TX and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Clifton, TX. He was a member of the

American Society of Engineers (ASE) and the American Society of Machine Tool Engineers (ASMTE). He loved to hunt and fish and was a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association (NRA).

Virgil passed peacefully in his sleep. He is survived by his beloved wife of nearly 71 years, Mary (Polly) Ferguson, daughters Dorothy Hemme and her husband Ken, Susanne Vaughan and her husband James, and Mary Blackburn and her husband Jeff, sons Dennis Ferguson and his wife Kathy and Charles Ferguson and his wife Shannon, 9 grandchildren Julie Hemme Reading, Ethan Hemme, Jessica Ferguson Davis, Laura Ferguson Day, Bridgette Vaughan Freeman, Natalie and Trevor Blackburn, Matthew-Virgil and David Ferguson), and 5 great-grandchildren Connor Norton, Declan Reading, and Aidan, Tristan, and Ronan Davis.

Cemetery Details

Gause City Cemetery

102 Oak St.
Gause, TX 77857

Previous Events

Graveside Service

AUG 31. 11:00 AM (CT)

Gause City Cemetery
102 Oak St.
Gause, TX 77857

Tribute Wall



“ *Was dear and true friend from high school. Polly was the perfect match for Virgil.. I regret not staying closer to them. With love and fond memories...Ed Hearn jehearn@sbcglobal.net. will be 90 in Feb.*

ED Hearn - December 31, 2016 at 09:14 AM