Colonel ‚ÄúRed‚Äù Lavoi Blackham Davis

July 16, 1919 ~ March 19, 2018

Colonel "Red" Lavoi Blackham Davis ended his mortal journey and joined his eternal companion of 72 years on March 19, 2018, at the age of 98. Born in Moroni, Utah, on July 16, 1919, Lavoi was the oldest living member of his father's family. He was one of four children born to Fred World and Genevieve Blackham Davis. Red was preceded in death by his three brothers and one sister.

Red attended grade school and Jr. High in Goshen, Utah, and then attended Payson High School. Red joined the Utah National Guard in 1938 and worked as a Radio Operator and Supply Sergeant.

He attended Army Flying School at Cuero, Brady, Kelly Field Texas and graduated as pilot, August 5, 1942.

Given his twin-engine cargo plane training, he was subsequently assigned to 36th Troop Carrier Squadron. He then departed the U.S. for Egypt in support of British General Montgomery and the British Forces in North Africa. Red flew combat missions in Africa, Sicily, and Italy and then returned to the States in December 1943. He was then assigned to Wilmington, Delaware, as an Army Acceptance Test Pilot for B-26 bombers and was later assigned to ferry B-24 bombers to combat units to replace unit aircraft losses. While flying various types of aircraft to combat units, he met a beautiful young lady who was attending Texas State University for Women. Often, he was able to route his aircraft deliveries so that he could stop in Dallas and date Neita Deane Sparkman‚Äîliterally "on the fly."

Red was assigned to the Reno Army Air Base to train in C-46 type aircraft where he completed the school; he was then retained as an instructor. He called Neita to come to Reno where they were married on September 11, 1944, by Bishop Eldon Wittwer at the Reno Army Air Base Chapel. Neita joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints while in Reno and was later sealed to Red in the Manti Temple. While in Reno, he trained pilots for flights from Assam, India, over the Himalaya "hump" to Kunming, China in support of General Wainright's forces who were fighting the Japanese in Burma.

Red was one of two flight instructors who were selected from Reno to go to the Air Corps Advanced instrument school in Homestead, Florida, in C-54 (four engine) type aircraft; and they were both retained as instructors. A hurricane literally blew down the base and they finished training their own students at Charleston, South Carolina. He was then selected to attend the Squadron Officer's School in Tyndall, Florida, and subsequently attended the Command and Staff College at the Air University in Montgomery, Alabama.

Red was then assigned to a map-making school in Washington, D.C., where he learned cartography, photogrammetry, geodesy, and cadastral work, and was subsequently assigned the Aeronautical Chart and Information Service plant in St. Louis, Missouri, as Chief of Operations. While in St. Louis, then Central States Mission, President Alvin R. Dyer, (later a counselor in the Church First Presidency under President McKay), called him to serve as a board member for the Aaronic Priesthood Activities in the Mission. When his military tour of duty

ended at the chart plant in St. Louis, he was transferred to Wiesbaden, Germany and assigned as commander of a Mapping and Charting Squadron.

Shortly after arriving in Germany, he was called to be the Branch President of the Wiesbaden Servicemen's Branch. Within a year, President Theodore M. Burton, West German Mission President, called Red to be the Servicemen's Coordinator for the West German Mission. Subsequently, President Alvin R. Dyer was called to serve as the European Mission President; and Red was called by President Dyer to serve as the European Mission Servicemen's Coordinator. It was fortunate for Red that he had units in Germany, England, France, and Spain because he could fly to all the L.D.S. Servicemen's' Branches in those areas for their regularly scheduled conferences and the yearly three-day conference at Berchtesgaden, Bavaria.

The Air Force transferred him to Albany Georgia to establish, (build and equip), the USAF Geodetic Production and Analysis Center. Their mission was to establish a geographic data base via an accurate aerial survey of South America and tie the data into the North American grid. This was vital because they had to establish precise geodetic points as a pre-cursor for NASA activities. They flew C-130 aircraft as a prime part of their data collection system. Shortly after Red's arrival in Georgia, he was called as the Branch President of the Albany Branch. Some months later he was called into the South Carolina Stake High Council and assigned to assist in establishing ward and branch boundaries between their stakes and the Mission. This proved to be an extremely complex task; but, very educational.

The Air Force selected Red to go to school and study electrical engineering. The Korean war interrupted the final quarter and he was tasked to establish a production and distribution system for aeronautical charts, radio facility charts, pilot handbooks, and target materials needed by the aircrews. He established the major printing facility in Hawaii and the compilation and distribution facilities in Tokyo and Tachikawa, Japan. Shortly after getting the facilities operational on the military mission, he was called to be the Servicemen's Coordinator for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for all Southeast Asia areas outside of Japan and Korea. This involved Church personnel from Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine units. They established Church groups on islands where there were sufficient numbers of Church members. On Okinawa they had several branches, and in the Philippines, they established a Church District with eight branches. This allowed Red to fly when and where he needed to do this work.

When his tour of duty was completed, the Air Force transferred him to Shaw Air Force Base as a squadron commander. While there, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and was sent to Vietnam as Vice Commander of a Reconnaissance Wing.

After arriving in Vietnam, Red was called as a counselor to the LDS Zone Leader, Al Rosa. During the Vietnam war he had close coordination with the Hong Kong Mission President, (Keith Garner of the Arlington Hills Ward) and with Elder Marion D. Hanks, "Duff", of the Seventy. (They would stay in his trailer on Tan Son Nhut Air Base, just outside of Saigon, on their regular, and most welcome, visits to the LDS Servicemen.)

When the Reconnaissance Wing Commander was transferred to the States, Red assumed the Wing Commander position. At the end of his tour of duty in Vietnam, he was assigned to Hawaii in the Joint Staff as Chief of Reconnaissance for four-star Admiral John McCain, who was the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command.

When his military retirement age was attained, Red retired to Federal Heights and went back to college for a few years.

As you can see, Red spent his life in loving service to his family, country, and to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was a man of great faith and loved the Lord and his family. Red served faithfully in all of his Church callings. In later years, his favorite calling was with the "Men" in his Primary classes where he was able to teach them about Heavenly Father's Plan of Salvation.

Red served in the Air Force as anaerial reconnaissance pilot. His favorite plane to fly was the F4 Phantom II Fighter Jet and was heard many times saying, ". . . and can you believe they PAID ME to fly that plane?" After retirement, Lavoi and Neita faithfully served two missions together for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He loved the ward and taught the young people of the ward the Plan of Salvation.

Lavoi's darling wife, Neita, passed away on January 26, 2017; they are survived by their five children: Lynn Lavoi Davis (Suzanne), Kristine Adele Chabries (Michael), Ben Fredric Davis (Dorothy), Kathleen Genevieve Hemingway, and Michael Jared Davis (Vivian). Also preceded in death by a grandson, Johnathan Davis, and granddaughters Aaliyah Chabries, Jennifer Chabries, and Stephanie Hemingway.

We will be forever grateful for the professional care and friendship of Dr. Cindi Jo Leech and her nurse, Sally Harrison, over the past years. Dad held you both in such high esteem. We also want to thank the team at Brighton Home Health/Hospice, especially Tiffany, dad's nurse. We are so grateful to our sweet daughter Emilie and our dear friend and neighbor Kim Godfrey for all their help.

There will be a viewing from 6 to 8 p.m. on Monday, March 26, at the Federal Heights Chapel in Salt Lake City, Utah, 1300 Fairfax Road. There will be a viewing on Tuesday, March 27, from 9:30-10:45 a.m. at the Federal Heights Chapel followed by the funeral at 11 a.m. Interment will be at the Lakeview Memorial Cemetery, 1640 East Lakeview Drive, Bountiful, Utah.

We love you Dad and will miss you so much. Thanks Dad and Mom for living lives worthy of emulation. "After all, our MOST important mission assignment--learn and LIVE the Gospel."

"The gospel of Jesus Christ is REALLY true!"