Robert Wilmer Simmons

October 1, 1917 ~ December 31, 2019

Robert (Bob) Wilmer Simmons was born October 1, 1917, in Mira, LA. He was one of nine children born to James Monroe Simmons and Bessie McLeish Simmons. He grew up working on a farm with his eight brothers and sisters, which he said taught him a lot about life. Bob met Ruth Van Buren at the Percy Crawford Christian Camp in the Poconos, PA and they were married for 47 years before her death in 1989. He later married Evelyn Yvonne Canady, to whom he was married for 25 years before her death in 2016.

A huge love of Bob's was riding motorcycles, which he rode almost daily from the age of 18 until he turned 93. (In fact, uncharacteristically, he was stopped for speeding coming home from church at age 92, but after looking at his driver's license, the police officer with raised eyebrows gave him only a warning).

His work experience included Western Union, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the movie business where he helped develop the first 3-D cameras for the emerging color movie industry. As a skilled machinist, he spent the bulk of his working years in the aviation industry, working for Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, where he maintained Air Force One at the then Idlewild Airport (now JFK) from the time period of Presidents Truman through Nixon (16 years). He later worked for American Airlines, where he assisted in opening and maintaining the DFW airport. Through much of his working life, he also maintained a fully equipped, personal machine shop in his basement where he fabricated customized parts for his employers and others.

Everyone loved listening to ‚ÄòGrandpa's' stories of his life history, where he would expound on events surrounding his work and his family. Although Bob had only a very limited opportunity for formal education (ended at 6th grade), he recognized the importance of education and he and Ruth encouraged their children to pursue higher education resulting in a medical school graduate, two who attended engineering school, and a doctoral-trained nurse professor.

During his life, Bob lived for extended periods in LA, TX, NY, FL, and SC. Most recently, following Evelyn's death, he lived for 2 years with his daughter, Nanci, and son-in-law, Charlie, in Salt Lake City, UT. His final year was spent at Legacy Village, an assisted-living facility in Sugarhouse, an upscale community of Salt Lake City, where he made new friends and received good care.

As a member of America's "Greatest Generation", Bob was a proud veteran of the US Army for 3 years and 18 days, where his duties included fighting in the European Theater during WWII. Just this past October, along with 20 other WWII centenarian veterans, he met and was honored by Utah Governor Herbert at the State Capital.

Bob was most proud of his family, including 47 yrs. of marriage to Ruth, his Christian life, and his many years of working multiple jobs to provide for his family. His favorite accomplishment was his apprenticeship as a machinist and the effect it had on his subsequent working life.

He said his secret to longevity was his Christian relationship with God, his creator. Anyone who knew him learned of his strong faith in Jesus Christ. He was a strong prayer warrior and loved to talk with anyone about his faith, which was often concluded by, "I usually take an offering at this time". Recently, he attended Capital Christian Church in Salt Lake City, and in fact, was in the congregation two days before his death. Perhaps another factor in his longevity was his lack of worry. His mantra was "take one day at a time" with an approach to life of accepting "whatever comes down the pike".

Bob was the longest surviving member of his siblings. He leaves 4 children from his marriage to Ruth: Robert, Kenneth, Nanci McLeskey, and Charles, 9 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, and 3 step-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed not only his family, but all those who had the privilege to meet him. As one friend put it, "We lost a mighty intercessor today! We loved hearing his stories and his love for Jesus".

Bob received compassionate care from the Solstice Hospice and Home Health Agency for the last 8 months. He lived fully up until he suffered a major neurologic event that resulted in his death on 12/31/19.

Funeral arrangements are being made by Larkin Funeral Home in Salt Lake City, UT and Southern Funeral Home in Winnfield, LA and include transporting Bob to his homeland in Verda, LA. Funeral services will be held at the Verda Baptist Church, 2688 Highway 122, Verda, LA 71454, followed by a graveside service at the Verda Cemetery in Verda, LA. Bob will be laid to rest next to his loving wife, Ruth, and many of his family members. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Solstice Hospice and Home Health https://www.solsticehc.com/ , Liberty University https://www.liberty.edu/ , and The Billy Graham Association https://billygraham.org/