

Harvey Mellar Hargraves

September 21, 1921 - July 30, 2019



Harvey Mellor Hargraves was born at home, September 21, 1921, to his parents Nettie and Otis L. Hargraves, in the 2000 block of beautiful Corley Avenue, in Beaumont, Texas.

The family lived in Beaumont through the 1920's, and in 1931 moved to LaBelle to establish a dairy farm. Harvey grew up in those years enjoying the amenities that came with the move to farm life, such as, no electricity, no running water, and taking baths in washtubs filled with well water warmed naturally by the high midday sun. In March, the children would

receive a new pair of overalls, and were allowed to run barefoot from March till November, when at that time, each would receive a new pair of shoes for the year. Chores around the farm included herding the cows by horse, plowing the ground for planting feed for the cows and food for the family, and milking the cows at 3am and again after school.

At one milking session, perhaps in the warmer months while not wearing shoes, he got to experience the feeling of a cow actually stepping on his bare big toe.

In 1935, both of his parents died, the cows were sold, and Harvey and his two younger siblings, James and Dorothy were orphaned, and moved to Beaumont near Amelia to live with Aunt Arlie. This new living arrangement did include running water, electricity, and a real bathtub. Aunt Arlie put him in his first suit and gave him his first Bible to carry in his hands. Harvey, his brother and sister lived here for only the one year.

During that time, Aunt Nellie, his mothers sister, who lived in Nome, Texas, had been working on adding a room to her house in that year, and was preparing to take in Harvey and his sister Dorothy in the year 1936. Aunt Nellie was married to Chester Swift from Woodbine, Georgia, but, never had children of their own. Aunt Nellie and Chester attended First Baptist Church of Nome, and in her lifetime, she cared

for many “youngins”, by running the nursery in the church during her 55 years of service.

Harvey would graduate in the Class of 1940 from Nome High School as valedictorian, team captain and quarterback of the 6 man football team. Weighing in at 100 pounds, he managed to score one “game winning” running touchdown his last senior season. Aunt Nellie encouraged him to go on to attend college, and he enrolled at Baylor University in the Fall of 1940.

In January of 1942, just after America’s “Day of Infamy” attack on Pearl Harbor, he signed up to take the elective class Aviation 101. His oldest brother, Otis was already serving in the Navy, and had survived the Pearl Harbor attack while on duty aboard the USS Downes.

After successfully completing his private pilot training, flying in a Taylor Craft that Spring of 1942, he remained at Baylor for only one more semester. He then reported for active duty and Basic Training in the US Army Air Corps at Sheppard Field, in Wichita Falls, Texas, in February 1943. [Just as his Aunt Nellie had prepared her home to be able to receive him in 1936, the Army Air Corps had been working to prepare his next stop, and completed Sheppard Field by 1942.]

After initial Basic Training, he attended Cadet Training conducted at Oklahoma A&M (Oklahoma State) in Stillwater, Oklahoma, then on to San Antonio, Texas to attend San Antonio Aviation Cadet Class Center, where cadets are tested for physical fitness and motor skills, psychological makeup and mental fitness, and experience the effects of being at altitude and placed in altitude chambers to 38,000 feet. After successfully completing all the tasks at hand, he was given two options. To enter Single Engine (Fighter Pilot) cadet training or Multi-Engine (Bomber Pilot/Navigator) cadet training. He immediately submitted his request for the Single Engine Fighter Pilot cadet pathway and got it.



In December 1943, he reported to Muskogee,

Oklahoma for Primary Flight Training, flying the 175 horsepower Fairchild PT-19 with instructor on board. He stated, it was easy to fly and landings were easy. In March 1944, he reported to Basic Flight Training, the second phase of training, in Coffeyville, Kansas, to begin flying the 450 horsepower Consolidated Vultee BT-13 single seater. He stated the BT-13 was harder to fly and even harder to consistently make good landings. His instructor was on the verge of washing him out of the program after repeated landings that were too low in approach. He was on what could have been his very last flight, and at 5000 feet, the plane began to shake violently then fell completely silent. He immediately radioed the base and began to setup for a “dead stick” , no power landing in a wheat field. He landed without incident and rolled to a stop in the middle of golden nowhere.

Not knowing the cause of what had just happened to his plane, he was afraid that he may have just made his last landing, and he knew his instructor was en route. His instructor flew out and landed in the same wheat field next to him. The instructor got out of his plane, and walked over without speaking, and grabbed the propellor and began to try to spin it. The propellor simply spun free in the engine and the crankshaft had broken by mechanical failure and by no fault of the pilot. Harvey would fly another day, and after that day his troubles and difficulties landing the BT-13 were no more.

Next stop was Moore Field in Mission, Texas, April 1944, to begin Advanced Flight Training flying the 650 horsepower AT-6 “Texan” with retractable landing gear. In this phase pilots learned instrument training, aerial gunnery, and dive bombing. It was at the end of this



training, that Harvey received his first pair of “butter bars” awarded the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, and his first pair of “silver wings” as a pilot in the USAAC.



After a short stint in July 1944, flying the 1200 horsepower V-12 “Flying Tigers” Curtiss P-40 Warhawk for just 10 hours, he then reported to Pocatello, Idaho. In September 1944, he began training to fly the plane that would take him to the war in Europe, the 2000 horsepower Republic P-47D with eight .50 caliber machine guns, and two 500 pound bombs or rockets.

Due to early heavy snow falls and the loss of several planes and pilots, the squadron moved from within the month, from Idaho to Greenville, Texas. Over the skies of North Texas, they learned to fly the P-47 at high altitude escort over 30,00 feet, and then flew down to Palacios, Texas to practice aerial gunnery out over the waters of the Gulf of Mexico till February 1945.

Before leaving in March 1945, Aunt Nellie, gave him a standard Baptist Broadman Hymnal for him to take to war. After leaving New York Harbor on a troop ship, he arrived in Naples, Italy on April 1, 1945. He then went on to arrived at his final destination in Pisa, Italy, to join the 346 Fighter Squadron of the 350 Fighter Group on April 21, 1945. He was only able to complete four bombing sorties over Northern Italy, before the war ceased in Italy, May 1, 1945. The official end of the war with Germany would be May 8, 1945.

Before flying into battle, the hymn “Rock of Ages”, was sung from the hymnal he had carried in his hands from Texas. On his last mission, in the air en route to their targets with his wingman, they were advised that the war was over, and to return to base “clean” and fly down low over the Italian hillsides and release their last bombs before landing. Since, their intended targets were never reached, perhaps there were a few weary Germans that made it home to see their homeland that lone day.

After the war ended in Europe, the squadron returned to New York via troop ship in late June, and it was there that some of the “newer” pilots were instructed to regroup and prepare for a journey to the Pacific Theater, as the war with Japan still continued on. By the time the logistics were worked out and the ships to the Pacific were prepared and loaded, they reached the Panama Canal. It was there, as the ships were being refueled for the long Pacific leg, that the war with Japan ended, September 2, 1945. The troop carriers simply turned around 180 degrees and returned to New York Harbor once again.



After a short period stationed at Seymour-Johnson Air Base in Goldsboro, North Carolina, Harvey separated from active duty but remained in the Army Air Corps Reserves. He then returned to Texas, Our Texas, and once again continued studies at Baylor University and graduated in Spring 1948.

During his time at Baylor, he met Alida Billene Richardson while visiting Beaumont with school friends before graduation. Upon graduation he started employment at Neches Butane Products Company where he would remain for 33 years. Neches Butane Products Company, was one of two plants in the United States that produced all the synthetic rubber during World War II. On December 21, 1948, he and Billene were married in Beaumont, Texas at Calvary Baptist Church. The marriage would produce, Bonnie Jeanine born in November 1950, and Mark Harvey born in March 1960.

In the early 1950's he settled into the usual domestic routines of life, regular work and work when you were at home, because he was “always working on something”. If he wasn't working on something in



the garage, then that meant he was mowing grass somewhere!

By 1953, he reinstated with the Air Force Reserve and joined a Pilot Training Group located at Ellington Air Force Base in Houston, Texas to fly Beechcraft C-45 twin engines. The Air Force soon changed the program to a Troop Carrier Group, and he enjoyed the opportunity to learn to fly the Curtiss C-46 Commando, in turn, attaining his Multi-Engine Commercial Pilots

license in the process. In 1958, the Air Force began cut backs, and that meant Harvey's military flying days were over.

Full-time retirement began in 1981, as an IBM mainframe computer operator, and Harvey spent most of the next 38 years at the family lake house on Toledo Bend Reservoir in East Texas. Even after Billene passed away in April 1993, and he lived independently and self sufficiently until 2013, driving until age 92. Harvey was not one to go to the doctor much, but, reluctantly at the age of 80, and, by the encouragement of his son, he at least agreed to begin annual checkups. A trip to the dentist in 2004, was his first exam since 1944.

After climbing a few long arduous trails up several "tall medical mountains" in his last years, he was able to spend one good fun year enjoying all the daily activities of an assisted living facility in The Woodlands, Texas. It was there that he finally realized that Bingo was not gambling, but, an exercise of mental agility and seeing if he could play 2,3, or 4 cards that day!

Harvey died peacefully at his home in the care of full-time staff, after a brief period of hospitalization.

The best way to describe Harvey is the he was always humble, and freely a giver of his time and resources. He simply was a giver of himself with a pure heart, exemplifying the words "do unto others as you

would them do to you.” Harvey was in the simplest form, a Christian with a high degree of rectitude [rightness of principle, conduct and moral virtue, i.e. “straightness.”]

He has already traded his cowboy hat for a crown!! See, Jesus didn't just carry The Cross, he carried Harvey through life!!

He is preceded in death by his wife Alida Billene Richardson Hargraves, his parents Otis Leander Hargraves, Sr. and Nettie Barrow, his sisters Virginia Chesson and Dorothy Hargraves, and his brothers, Otis Leander Hargraves, Jr., Harry Hill Hargraves, and James G. Hargraves.

Survivors include: his daughter, Bonnie Jeanine Hargraves Reeves of Monterey, LA and her husband Herschel, his son, Mark Harvey Hargraves and his wife Cynthia Ann of The Woodlands, Texas, his grandsons E. Chad Madenwald of Fort Collins, CO and his wife Racheal and their two sons, Lane Albert and Barrett Mellar, Brennan Hill Hargraves of Houston, Texas and his wife Colleen, and Byron T. Hargraves of Bulverde, Texas, and granddaughter Ashlyn Alida Hargraves of Houston, Texas, and several nieces and nephews.

At three o'clock in the afternoon on a hot August day, you would usually expect to find Harvey in one place ... outside!!

And one last Harvey phrase to remember:

“There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but, there are no old bold pilots !!”

Special Thanks go out to:

Crossroads Baptist Church of The Woodlands for visiting “ Church In The Dining Hall “ that ministers to the needs of residents of Reunion Court.

All the caring staff at Reunion Court of The Woodlands, to include: Elizabeth, Laryssa, Ramona, Peter, Andrea, Valerie, Barbara, Nikia, Peggie, Stephanie, Lisa Marie, Penny, Jennifer, Debra, Nora, any staff names not known and his favorite activities helper & “bingo” caller Windy.

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FCG DA

Rock of Ages

ITALY 1945 CAPRAIS
P. 47 BOMB RUN

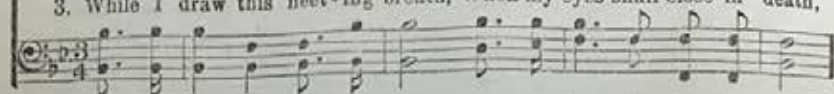
AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

TOPLADY

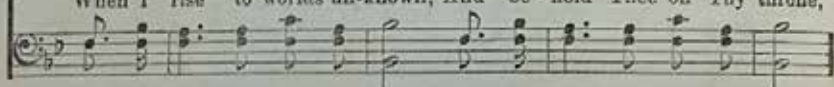
THOMAS HASTINGS



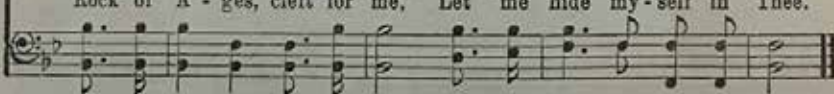
1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me. Let me hide my - self in Thee;
 2. Could my tears for - ev - er flow. Could my zeal no lan - guor know,
 3. While I draw this fleet - ing breath, When my eyes shall close in death,



Let the wa - ter and the blood, From Thy wound - ed side which flowed,
 These for sin could not a - tone; Thou must save, and Thou a - lone:
 When I rise to worlds un - known, And be - hold Thee on Thy throne,



Be of sin the dou - ble cure. Save from wrath and make me pure.
 In my hand no price I bring, Sim - ply to Thy cross I cling.
 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee.



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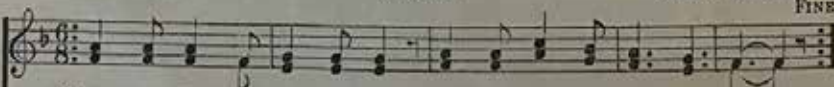
Jesus, Lover of My Soul

CHARLES WESLEY

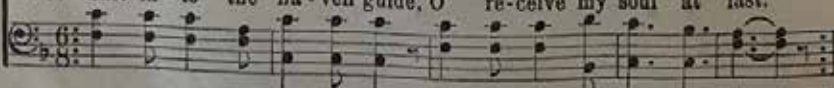
MARTYN

SIMEON B. MARSH

FINE



1. { Je - sus, Lov - er of my soul, Let me to Thy bos - om fly, }
 { While the near - er wa - ters roll, While the tem - pest still is high! }
 D. C. - Safe in - to the ha - ven guide, O re - ceive my soul at last.



Hide me, O my Sav - iour, hide, Till the storm of life is past;



HEADQUARTERS
ARMY AIR FORCES CENTRAL FLYING TRAINING COMMAND
Office of the Commanding General

October 13, 1943

Randolph Field, Texas

Mrs. Nellie Swift,
Box 112,
None, Texas.

Dear Mrs. Swift:

In a memorandum which has come to my desk this morning, I note that your boy has been classified for Pilot training and that he is being appointed an Aviation Cadet in the Army Air Forces.

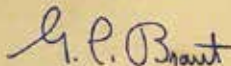
In order to win this war, it is vital to have the best qualified young men at the controls of our military aircraft. Upon their precision, daring and coolness will depend in large measure the success of our entire war effort.

The duties of an Army Pilot call for a high degree of mental and physical alertness, sound judgment, and an inherent aptitude for flying. Men who will make good material for training as Pilots are rare. The Classification Board believes your boy is one of them and that he will in all probability win his wings as a military pilot.

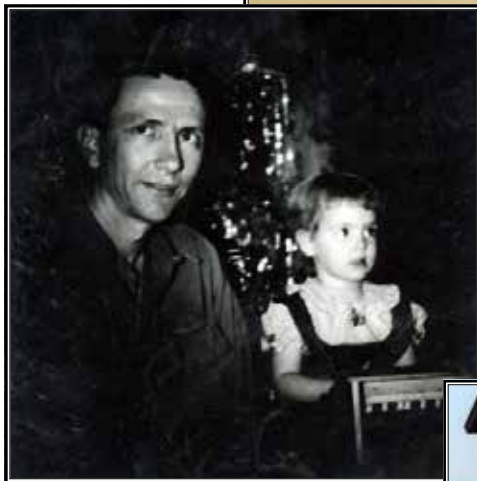
You must realize, however, that all of our study of the problem has produced no infallible method of determining in advance whether a young man has that inherent something which will make him a natural and safe pilot. As a result, some pilot candidates are later transferred to other types of military training.

Comprehensive tests indicate that your boy stands a very good chance of successfully completing the rigid training for an army pilot and you have every reason to be proud of him. I congratulate you and him.

Sincerely yours,

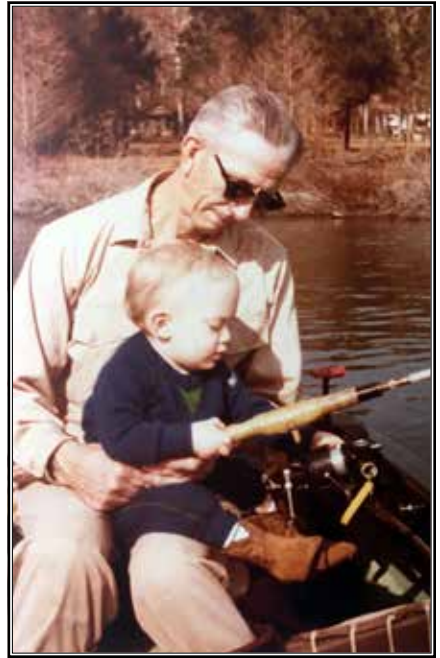


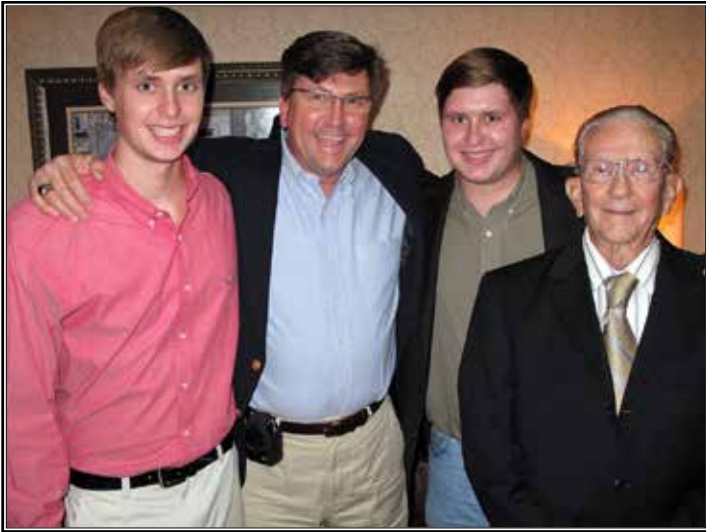
G. C. ERANT
Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding













Graveside Service

Friday, August 9, 2019 3:00 p.m.

Magnolia Cemetery

Beaumont, Texas

Reverend Lynn Ashcroft

Military Honors

United States Air Force



Broussards
Established 1889

Please sign Mr. Hargraves' guest book and share your memories at
www.broussards1889.com