



## William Edward Smith

April 26, 1925 - December 14, 2017

Born in Long Beach, California on April 26, 1925, Bill spent his early years in various elementary schools in California and Texas, and at 13 years of age, was quite proud of his first job delivering newspapers and getting his Social Security Card; as a young boy, Bill was an animal lover, relished playing marbles "for keeps" and riding his bicycle all around town. Bill attended Long Beach Poly High, Wasco High and eventually graduating from Bakersfield High School in 1943. Bill was quite athletic in high school ♦ tennis, swimming, baseball and playing quarterback for Wasco and BHS football programs. Bill also worked for his uncle Oscar's newspaper distribution business while attending high school. After being in the Army Air Force reserves in high school, Bill enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1943 and attended the Air Corp State College in Eau Claire, WI majoring in aeronautical engineering; his favorite classes were aviation mechanics and mechanical drawing. He served his country as an electrical aircraft mechanic until his honorable discharge in 1946. Bill's deepest disappointment was not being able to have a career in the Air Force after the war. Instead, Northrup Aeronautical Institute was hiring newly discharged WWII engineers and mechanics, so Bill learned to build prototypes of various aircraft and the Northrup experimental flying wing. Bill graduated from Bakersfield College in 1948 and soon after he met and married Billee Hess in 1950, and they were quickly blessed with three daughters, Stephanie, Coleen and Teddy. After living in Long Beach and Bishop, CA, Bill and Billee bought their first home and settled in Taft,

California in 1952, where he gave up the newspaper business and began a new career as an independent insurance agent for over 25 years. His love for flying was never far from his mind, as he knew at the age of 5 he wanted to fly, so he became a private pilot in the 1960's and the Smith family spent many memorable and happy times together flying to the beach for the day, over the Grand Canyon, landing on Catalina Island's famous uphill runway, or camping out on a tarmac under the wing of his beloved Bonanza at an air rally in Palm Desert. Bill spent many hours at the Taft airport with his pilot friends, doing maintenance on his plane or building an experimental plane, but mostly sharing flying stories with other pilots. Following Billee's death in 1984, Bill moved to San Diego to work at his cousin's business, Hawthorne Machinery Company, as a Risk Manager. Bill found a new life in San Diego and made many life-long friends through dancing and golfing and convincing them all to go flying with him. After retirement from Hawthorne Machinery Company, Bill moved to Visalia where he spent his final years. He remained active in the community, golfing and attending local senior dances in Visalia, Tulare and Porterville.

Bill is survived by his three loving daughters: Stephanie and Bill Thiessen of Visalia, CA, Coleen and Michael Baker of Little River, SC, and Teddy and Richard Hiteman of Las Vegas, NV. He is also survived by grandchildren Tony Baker, Andrea Torres, Kira Moore and Ryan Parrott and several step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will miss him dearly. The family thanks the staff at Evergreen Assisted Living in Visalia for their loving care during Bill's final year.

At Bill's request, no services will be held. Donations may be made to the charity of your choice.

"Once you have flown, you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward for there you have been, and there you long to return." Leonardo Da Vinci