



Melbourne Kimsey

October 16, 1930 - August 4, 2021

Brigadier General Melbourne and Alta Vance Kimsey

This memorial/obituary includes both of our parents because their lives were so entwined. Indeed, they were married from the time they were teens. It was a patriarchal family in discipline and principle. A matriarchal family in love and loyalty. It would be disingenuous to honor one without the other. They were a team—not like a ball team—more like a dance troupe. Chaos and creativity during good times, a smoothly running machine when time to relocate and reboot.

Brig Gen Melbourne Kimsey grew up picking cotton and working in the fields of Georgia as a sharecropper.

But from his first sighting of an airplane in 1937 his dream was to fly. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1946 at the age of 15 and a half.

Dad was a living Horatio Alger story. As a boy of six years he contracted osteomyelitis. A bone disease that meant he could no longer walk. He built himself a cart to push himself around. Eventually he was referred to the Scottish Rite Hospital in Atlanta where they operated on his leg so he

could walk. This was a harrowing experience for a little boy. He never forgot the hospital and people who saved his life. He has left a lifetime endowment to Scottish Rite in appreciation.

His fascination with building things grew and he became the mechanical 'wunderkind' of his family. Always the one to assist his father with farm machinery repairs. It continued into his Air Force career and he became the guy in the airplane who could listen to the scream of an engine and diagnose its ills just by listening.

This was the boy our mother, Alta Leona Vance, fell in love with in 1947. Dad was a B-29 Radio Nav Operator at the time. Mom was a Montana farm girl, right out of high school, post WWII, ready to enjoy and share the new world. The day they met they stayed up all night talking after a church dance in Fairfield, Montana while Dad was on an Army Air Corps military trip. They continued to develop their relationship by writing each other letters daily. Eventually Mom took a bus from Fairfield, Montana to Fairfield, California to begin the adventure that would take them from Coast to Coast across the United States and eventually the world. Traveling was their favorite adventure. They traveled to 50 states and most of Europe. Not bad for a country girl and boy.

"Kim" Kimsey, as Mom knew him, left the Army Air Corps to attend University of Georgia on the GI Bill. He saw an ad in the University paper that said, "Learn to Fly, Get Paid for It." This was his dream come true. He joined ROTC immediately and was the Distinguished Graduate upon his graduation. His ranking allowed him a pilot training slot in the newly formed US Air Force. Within a few years he was cited

for heroism. A parade was conducted in his honor. He had saved the lives of his crew when his KC97 aircraft caught fire just prior to take off. At one point in time he was the highest decorated officer in the US Air Force. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Distinguished Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Soldier's Medal, the Bronze Star, numerous Air Medals with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters. But the one accomplishment he was most proud of was his USAF Command Pilot Wings. He was a command pilot in both Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command. At one point he was qualified in five aircraft types at once; a rarity in the military then and unheard of now. General Kimsey was one of the few pilots who mastered his beloved F-111A and the bomber version. the FB-111. He commanded a squadron of F-100s in Vietnam and logged thousands of hours in the B-52 starting in 1959. He culminated his flying career as the Wing Commander at Blytheville AFB from 1976-1978. He went on to assignments at the Pentagon, NSA

and NORAD. Throughout his career he was a part of numerous events that impacted the security of our nation.

During all this, Mom kept the family going and growing. Her 'meritorious service medal' included successfully raising seven children. Often on her own, as a single Mom, while Dad was temporarily doing his Duty around the world. She proudly boasted of her fifteen grandchildren and twenty great-grandchildren. She loved to talk

about her family with a smile and an obvious sense of joy and fulfillment. She was a Renaissance woman before her time. She was a talented prolific artist. An accomplished seamstress. A well-read citizen who could talk politics with authority but shift to NASCAR or gardening or literature or most any subject with ease. She was the 4H and girl scout leader to dozens of children, the head of the PTA and the Officers Wives Club and ran the Charity Thrift Shop. All of this while making all of her children's clothes! To this day, a prized gift to all is the quilts she made with remnants of the clothes she had made over the years for her children and grandchildren. And of course, her many beautiful paintings. What is less discussed and known is that in many of the approximately 25 geographical moves made during their career assignments, Mom was often the one who moved the family. Dad had to report to duty ahead of them. Mother had to gather the troops, marshal forces (the older kids) and conduct movement. All of us went to multiple schools prior to graduation-our minor fete. What we did not ponder was Mom leading that move via car, bus, train or plane, dealing with illnesses, screaming babies, whining toddlers and middle schoolers (all at once), negotiating vaccinations, passports and the many requirements of moves. Just imagine getting all those children enrolled, disenrolled and enrolled again in schools, sports, activities, medical and hospital visits... This for 2, 4, 6 and 7 kids over the years! And today we get frustrated with the DMV! All this incredible accomplishment was not without rough edges, frayed nerves, sad and miserable times. But it

was a gauntlet thrown down that the family could overcome. The two of them rose above the challenges every time with perseverance and eventually the sheer power of love and loyalty between them. Often forged in fire, but cooled and steeled by the grace and kindness of their love for one another and their children.

A Memorial Service to honor the lives of Brigadier General Melbourne Kimsey, October 16, 1930 to August 4, 2021 and Alta Vance Kimsey, April 4, 1929 to December 26, 2014 will be held at Rockville Cemetery Chapel on August 26, 2021 at 11am PST. Address 4219 Suisun Valley Road, Suisun Valley, California. Our Family would be honored to share their memory by the attendance of friends and family. We will also share the service via Zoom. Join Zoom Meeting <https://usc.zoom.us/j/94342939328>

Pending final burial at Arlington National Cemetery.
Date not available at this time.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

AUG **26**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Rockville Stone Chapel
4219 Suisun Valley Road
Fairfield, CA 94533

Tribute Wall

AK

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Alicia Kimsey - August 21, 2021 at 07:32 PM

EK

“ 7 files added to the album Memories Album



Erin Kimsey - August 20, 2021 at 11:50 AM