
COLONEL JOSEPH L. LAUGHLIN (U.S.A.F. RETIRED)

From "The Tulsa World," Wednesday, February 22, 2006



**Colonel
Joseph L.
Laughlin
(U.S.A.F. Retired)**

LAUGHLIN -- Colonel Joseph L., (U.S.A.F. Retired), at age 88, slipped the surly bonds of earth and joined his former aviators on Friday, February 17, 2006. Son of Charles A. and Gertrude I. Laughlin and born in Grand Island, NE on June 26, 1917, he attended University of Nebraska prior to entering Flying Cadet training at Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa, OK. Commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in July, 1940 at Kelly Field, TX with an initial assignment to Wheeler Field, HI, he was transferred to Westover Field, MA for the formation of the 362nd Fighter Group, flying P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft. The Group was subsequently transferred to the European Theatre in November, 1943. European operations included combat assignments in England and multiple combat assignments in France and Germany, including close air support operations for Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army during Battle of the Bulge. He assumed command of the 362nd Fighter Group in August, 1944 and was promoted to Colonel in November, 1944. He was credited with 3 air victories and the sinking of 1 German light cruiser. Worldwide post-war assignments included the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., Chief Air Force Section MAAG, Taiwan, Wing Commander 506th Tactical Air Command (TAC) Fighter Wing at Tinker AFB, OK, Commander Combat Crew Training Wing at Nellis AFB, NV, Chief of Staff 12th Air Force in Waco, TX, Director of Training, TAC Headquarters at Langley AFB, VA, Chief of Staff 17th Air Force at Ramstein AFB, Germany, Deputy Commander Air Forces 314th Air Division, Korea, and Senior Air Force Advisor U.S. Army Field Artillery Center Ft. Sill, OK. Graduated from Air Command and Staff School in 1948 and Air War College in 1952. Retired from active duty after 30 years service in November, 1969. Decorations awarded include Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with 15 Oak Leaf Clusters, American Defense Service Medal with 1 Bronze Star, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic/Pacific Campaign Medal with 1 Bronze Star, European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 7 Bronze Stars, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Force Longevity Service Award and Clusters for 30 years and French Croix De Guerre with Palm. Married October, 1945 to Audrey Jean (McElroy) Laughlin. Col. Laughlin is survived by his wife, Audrey of Claremore, OK; son, Bruce and wife, Mary Jo of Tulsa, OK; son, Craig and wife, Janice with granddaughters, Jennifer and Jamie of Lewisville, TX; daughter, JoAnn Keirseay and grandson, Collin of Oklahoma City, OK; and daughter, Kelly and husband, Chris Rooker with grandson, Robert and granddaughter, Elizabeth of Oklahoma City, OK. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to Air Force Museum Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 33624, Wright Patterson AFB, OH 45433. Include the name of the honoree, your name and address, and the name and address of the family to be notified. An acknowledgement will be sent to you, the donor, and the appropriate family will be notified of your generosity. Additionally, an entry will be recorded in the automated donor book of record. Donations may also be sent to the church or charity of your choice. A Memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday, February 26, 2006, at the Floral Haven Chapel in