

## **Don Vincent Cunningham | 1931-2016**

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Don Vincent Cunningham

Don Vincent Cunningham, 84, died Sunday, July 31, 2016.

Funeral is 9 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at Highland Baptist Church in Denton with burial to follow at the historic Walnut Grove Cemetery in Prosper.

Visitation is 6 to 8 p.m. Friday at DeBerry Funeral Directors in Denton.

A seventh generation Texan, Don was born Aug. 10, 1931, in Amarillo to William Vincent Cunningham and Tennessee Velma “Patsy” Caudle. Reared in Abernathy, he helped his father run the Cunningham Cotton Gin, still operating today as City Gin. He attended Hardin Simmons University for two years and played in the renowned Cowboy Marching Band.

In 1951, during the Korean War, he enlisted in the Air Force. He was selected to attend flight school and commissioned as a pilot in 1953. Trained as a fighter pilot, he was assigned to fly the all-weather interceptor F-86D. He flew with the 321st Fighter Interceptor Squadron from Truax Air Base, Wis., and received the National Defense Service Medal.

Returning as a first lieutenant, Don finished his Bachelor of Business Administration at Hardin Simmons and began flying for Central Airlines. While with Central and Braniff

Airlines, he flew the DC-3 and Lockheed Electra before starting his Masters of Business Administration at Baylor University.

At both Hardin Simmons and Baylor he sang in the a cappella choir under the legendary Dr. Euell Porter. He married Maryetta Fewin of Columbus, Kan., in 1960. He began flying for Eastern Airlines in 1963, and in 1988, completed 25 safe years as a captain.

While with Eastern, he flew the DC-9, B-727 and L-1011 aircraft. After retirement from Eastern, he joined the FAA as a flight safety inspector until his second retirement in 1993. He worked with the Texas Baptist Men to build the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Alberta, Canada. Don was a charter and life member of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, American Legion, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Wise County Veterans Group, Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association and Wood Turners of North Texas.

He will always be remembered for his faithful Christian witness, his quiet, gentle love and deep appreciation for simple things. He was a consummate man of his word, characterized by true and sacrificial giving. An anchor for his family, church and country because of his first love, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don is survived by his wife of 56 years; children Laurel Cunningham, Bruce Cunningham and Donna Westbrook; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be made to Cal Farley's Boys Ranch, P.O. Box 1890, Amarillo, TX; Wise County Veterans Group or Highland Baptist Church of Denton.