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# Richard V. "Dick" Wheeler

1921-2009



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Richard Vincent Wheeler passed away on December 29, 2009, surrounded by his loving family.

Richard grew up in a military family as an "Army brat." He then decided that it was the life for him. After high school he entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York, graduating with the Class of 1943. He was immediately sent to the European Theater of Operations and flew the A-20 Havoc, a two-engine, low level bomber. He flew 69 missions; the 33rd mission was part of the "D-day" invasion of Normandy in World War II.

After the war he had many assignments throughout the U.S., including

Fairbanks, Alaska. His service schools included the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio; Command and Staff School at Montgomery, Alabama; and the Marine Senior School at Quantico, Virginia.

In 1950, Richard was the Chief of Parachute Test Section of the Aero Medical and Equipment Laboratory, which conducted live jump testing of experimental parachutes in a high altitude bail-out program at White Sands, New Mexico. He personally set a world record with his jump from an altitude of 42,450 feet (8 miles), a feat which earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster.

In 1951, while stationed at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, he married Alice Leatherman. They were blessed with four wonderful children.

From 1960 to 1964, he was Test Director for the Titan 2 Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile Program at Vandenberg Air Force Base. After 12 consecutive underground silo launches, the Air Force accepted the Titan 2 as the cornerstone of its nuclear deterrent.

Richard retired as a Colonel from the Air Force in 1968 and worked in the aerospace industry at McDonnell Douglas for 10 years. For the next 10 years he was self-employed before retiring to San Diego Country Estates, where he thoroughly enjoyed playing golf at the San Vicente Golf Club. He was also actively involved in his church, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in Ramona.

Richard was a loving husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by his wife, Alice; son, Thomas (Elizabeth); daughter, Susan (Neil) Ruegsegger; fraternal twins, Lynn (Joey) Moore and Timothy Wheeler; and his five grandchildren, Lexi and Lindsey Ruegsegger, and Danielle, Ryan and Kevin Moore.

He will be greatly missed by those who knew and loved him. Interment will be at the USMA West Point Cemetery in New York.

To Plant Memorial Trees in memory, please visit our [Sympathy Store](#).

Published in La Jolla Light from Jan. 27 to Feb. 26, 2010.


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February 2, 2010

I miss you so much Dad.

Love you, Suz

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February 2, 2010

The most amazing guy, who led an incredible life. Not to mention, being a wonderful grandfather. Thank you for setting an example of how to live. I love you.

**Lexi**

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