



Vergil Rodgers

July 5, 1923 - February 15, 2025

On February 15, 2025, Vergil Rodgers was reunited with Vivian, his high school sweetheart and wife of 76 years. Having spent 101 years on God's earth, Vergil leaves quite a history of love, service, and accomplishments.

Not only was Vergil loved by his wife; he was loved and respected by everyone with whom he was associated. His family adored him, calling him "the most decent man we know." He was sweet, good natured, patriotic, and kind, and he loved God, his family, and his friends beyond words.

Vergil and his twin sister Verla were born on July 5, 1923, on the family farm in Oklahoma, becoming the last two of nine children. His dad was Daniel Boone Rodgers and his mother Charmion Estelle Gassaway Rodgers, early immigrants to what became Oklahoma.

After high school graduation in Gracemont, OK, Vergil attempted to join the Army Air Corps. After failing the physical tests, he was able to join the Merchant Marines. Eventually, he did pass the tests to join the Air Corps and traveled throughout America as he was trained for his new military life and duties. Graduating from Aerial Gunnery School, he received his wings and flew to England in a B-24 Liberator bomber where he joined the 8th Air Force, 467th Bomb Group, and 789th Bomb Squadron. His missions into the heart of Germany, central Europe, and southern France as a bombardier, " togglier,"

and nose gunner included bombing some of the last Nazi strongholds during the war's last days.

At war's end in 1945, he was reassigned to the states and immediately was able to reconnect with Vivian around June 1. On June 30, they were married in Oklahoma City. After V.J. Day, he served tours in Harlingen, Texas, then Denver, Colorado, and Kadena, Okinawa where he joined a B-29 crew. That training and assignment brought him back to the states where he joined the 301st Bomb Wing and found the home where he and his family of four would live for many years, Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Louisiana.

The 301st Bomb Wing provided major support of the "cold war" effort, and Vergil became a B-29 refueling operator and was a pioneer in air-to-air-refueling. After the KB-29, KC-97, and KC-135 were developed, he clocked 5,700 hours of flying time.

In the summer of 1960, his refueling squadron was transferred to Newfoundland, and the family moved and lived there four years. While there, he was also able to attend the University of Maryland extension program. In 1963, Vergil was selected Airman of the Year of the Strategic Air Command and was honored in Washington, D.C. by General Curtis LeMay, adding to his many commendations for service. From Newfoundland, he was reassigned to Barksdale, and he was given multiple assignments during the Vietnam War to provide refueling support to the bombers and fighters there before he was grounded because of rapid heartbeat. The Wing Commander of the Second Bomb Wing then chose Chief Master Sergeant Rodgers as his Wing Sergeant Major. He retired from the position and the United States Air Force on March 1, 1970.

After he retired, he worked 10 years for Levi Strauss & Company, and that brought him to Tyler, Texas. He was chairman of the board and member of the

board of trustees of Glenwood United Methodist Church, and then a member of Marvin Methodist Church. He was active in many other church and volunteer activities, including directing a program for Widowed Persons Support Services and Grief and Loss programs at the state and local level.

On Veterans Day 2017, Vergil was awarded the French Legion of Honor by the French Consul General, Alexis Andres, at the state Capitol in Austin. This award is given only to American servicemen/women whose activities directly contributed to France's liberation during WWII.

Vergil was preceded in death by his parents, his loving wife, and eight siblings. He is survived by daughter, Ginger Sawyer; son, Victor, and his wife Pebbie; grandson, Douglas Clayton Sawyer (Kelli); granddaughter, Deanna Sawyer Hare (Steve); grandson, Daniel Boone Rodgers; great-grandson, Clayton Sawyer (Vanessa); great-granddaughter, Emma Dawn Sawyer (Ty); great-grandson, Noah Richard Sawyer; and great-great-granddaughter, Landri Mae Senn.

Visitation at Stewart Family Funeral Home will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, February 24, followed by memorial services in the chapel at 2:00 p.m., and graveside at Rose Lawn. Vergil's dear friend and Pastor Gerry Giles will officiate.

Memorial gifts in Vergil's honor may be made to Marvin Methodist Church, 300 W. Erwin St., Tyler, TX 75702 or to All Saints Service Learning Mission Trip, 2695 SSW Loop 323, Tyler, TX 75701.

Cemetery Details

Rose Lawn Cemetery

2003 Blue Mountain Blvd.
Tyler, TX 75703

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 24. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Service

FEB 24. 2:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Tribute Wall



“ *Stewart Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Vergil Rodgers*



Stewart Family Funeral Home - February 20, 2025 at 05:20 PM

JS

“ *Sending so much love and our hearts are heavy even though Heaven rejoices at Vergil's homecoming.*

We were so happy to be able to attend his 100th birthday party in 2023 and meet our loved ones again.

What a life well lived. Our deepest condolences. Your family in California.

David and Nelda McArthur

Mark and Janette Stuart

Warren and Darlene McBride

Keith McBride

Janette Stuart - February 25, 2025 at 07:32 PM

ES

“ I have fond memories of Sgt and Mrs Rodgers from Newfoundland, where my father was stationed. Ginger became my best friend, so I got to know the family well. Sgt Rodgers once told me to call him Virgil, but I never could do that. I feel so honored to have known Virgil and Vivian (my girl scout leader). I'm sure my parents were there to welcome him to that special place in heaven where heroes gather. To Sgt Rodgers: I salute you, and thank you. Rest in peace.

Ellie Schroeder - February 24, 2025 at 03:20 PM

BC

“ Beth C. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Vergil Rodgers.

Beth C. - February 24, 2025 at 03:12 PM

BC

“ To Ginger and family — as the saying goes and so amply applies, your Dad was a true officer and a gentleman. The awards and accolades are so well deserved. But most of all was his love of family that stands out. What a wonderful gift. My deepest sympathies, love and blessings to you. Beth and Bob Claude

Beth Claude - February 24, 2025 at 03:07 PM

R&

“ Rick Davidson &Company planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Vergil Rodgers.

Rick Davidson &Company - February 24, 2025 at 08:11 AM

R&

“ Rick Davidson & Company purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Vergil Rodgers.



Rick Davidson & Company - February 24, 2025 at 08:11 AM

JT

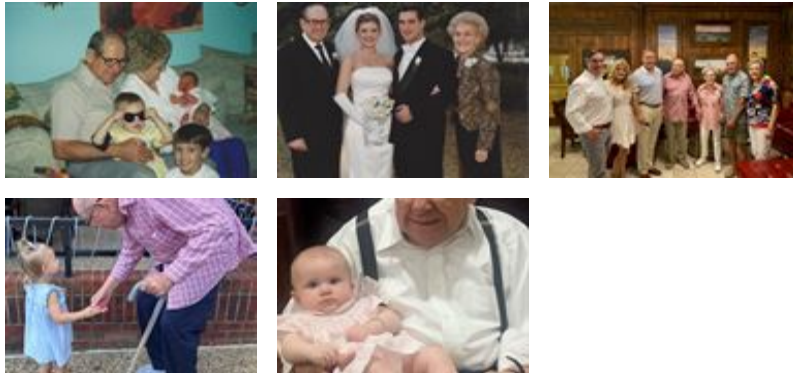
“ Jeff and Pam Townsend purchased the Tender Tribute for the family of Vergil Rodgers.



Jeff and Pam Townsend - February 22, 2025 at 09:49 AM



“ 92 files added to the album Life Tributes



Stewart Family Funeral Home - February 20, 2025 at 05:16 PM

JS

Such wonderful photos. Sending our love and condolences to Vergil's family and friends.

Janette Stuart - February 23, 2025 at 05:31 PM