



## Hugo Ernst Richter, Jr.

January 17, 1915 - August 13, 2018

Hugo Ernst Richter, Jr. died peacefully in his sleep on Aug. 13, 2018 in Dallas, Texas. He was 103 years old - the last of a generation in his family to pass. Born Jan. 17, 1915 at home near Marble Falls, Texas, he was the eldest child of Hugo Ernst Richter and Helene Klappenbach Richter. The family grew to include three other children: Richard, known as “Rudy,” Helen and Wilma. In the early 1920s, the family moved to Abernathy, Texas, where Hugo and his siblings would grow up. From bouncing, horse-drawn wagon rides to recounting his sister’s birth, Hugo’s vivid and detailed memories of these days are a family treasure. His life spanned the years of an era marked by profound change – from the 1915 Model T Ford he assembled to the Facebook profile he maintained on his iMac. His contribution to World War II lay not on the battlefield, but in the sky. As a mechanical engineer, he labored in the aerospace plants of Southern California where he helped design and build aircraft. His first language was German; he learned English in the classroom. He graduated from Abernathy High School and kept up with his classmates over the years, including Alice Adkisson, whom he met in the second grade. He had a paper route and liked to tinker with bicycles. Although his family wasn’t rich – they grew cotton, and his father worked various jobs including one with the farm bureau – they put a premium on education. Hugo would go on to earn an engineering degree from Texas Tech University in 1940. A group of classmates found good jobs in Southern California, and he rode out on his Harley Davidson motorcycle to join them. He kept in touch by letter with a girl

he'd met in Lubbock and eventually asked Jolene Jordan Simmons to marry him. They wed in Yuma, Arizona, on Jan. 1, 1942. Their first daughter, Karen Gay, was born Aug. 29, 1945. Their second daughter, Kimberly Ann, was born Jan. 14, 1950. The family moved to Northridge, California, in 1956, where the girls grew up. Hugo eventually became a nuclear design engineer with Atomics International and was part of the team that built the first Sodium Reactor Experiment in the Santa Susana Mountains in the early 1950s. He also designed a nuclear reactor to be launched into space. Through various acquisitions and mergers, he worked on classified nuclear projects to the end of his career. The boy who liked tinkering with bicycles went on to tinker with cars in his garage, which resembled a small auto shop. In the mid-1950s he began gathering parts – some literally from the desert, spotted on vacation – to build his first Model T Ford. He worked to make the 1915 authentic – down to the upholstery, which he buttoned and tucked himself. He became a founding member of the Model T Ford Club of America. He would later build a 1914 Coupe and a 1913 Touring, and rework a 1926 Coupe he purchased. Hugo penned several articles for Vintage Ford Magazine and wrote a repair manual for Model T carburetors. After retiring in 1977, he and Jolene moved to Aubrey, Texas, building a home next to their daughter, Karen. She had married James Blalock, an Abernathy boy. Hugo also built what came to be known as “the Edifice,” a two-bay workshop. The Edifice eventually morphed into a three bay structure sporting RV storage - dubbed "Monster Mansion" by Jolene. Later he added a two-story workshop to house a massive lathe downstairs and a darkroom upstairs. Jolene christened this addition "Cheapo Condo." Hugo's son-in-law James shared his love of tinkering, and the two spent many hours hunched over engines, axles and drivetrains. Hugo and Jolene celebrated 50 years of marriage before Jolene died in 1992. He later surprised his daughters by announcing that he planned to remarry. He courted Alice Adkisson Stapleton - the girl he knew from second grade - and they were wed in Petersburg, Texas, in 1994. He and Alice enjoyed 21 years together, touring with the local Model T Club chapter and traveling to

destinations like Germany and Alaska. They enjoyed simple activities, like playing dominoes and canning jam together. When they could no longer manage alone at home, they moved to Redbird Manor in Sanger, Texas, where Alice died Oct. 15, 2015. After that, Hugo moved to Monticello West in Dallas. Hugo's character was marked by a resilient optimism that served him to the end. He never complained about change, but rolled with it. His remarkable memory gave his descendants an unusual window on the past, making the family narrative real and immediate with stories of his parents' and grandparents' generations. He kept reproductions of paintings by his great-grandfather Hermann Lungwitz on his walls - reminders of his Hill Country German roots. He drove until he was 100, taking his family for a spin in his 1915 Model T at a 100th birthday gala held by family and the Model T Club. A local news channel was on hand to chronicle the celebration. He gave the T to his grandson, Ric Martin, who shared his love of old cars and wrenching, which they enjoyed doing together. He spent his last Christmas with family at his daughter's house, savoring not just good company, but one of his favorite dishes: prime rib. In January 2018, the Model T Club celebrated his 103rd birthday, along with close family and all but one of his nieces. His was a good life, lived well. The family would especially like to thank the staff and caregivers at Monticello West and Helping Hands Hospice, who made his last days comfortable, peaceful and secure. He is predeceased by both his wives, Jolene and Alice; his daughter, Karen Blalock, and her husband, James Blalock; his brother and sisters; and his nephew Keith Richter. He is survived by his daughter Kimberly Martin Pierce and partner Alfonso Cevola, Dallas; grandson Richard Martin and partner Teresa Rafidi, Carrollton, Texas; grandson Jason Blalock, Southeast Asia; granddaughter Anna Pierce, Austin, Texas; step-daughters Jeanne Thompson, Possum Kingdom, Texas, and Jodi Case, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and their children; and great-grandsons Caleb Martin and Joshua Martin, Carrollton. A memorial service will be held at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, August 25, at the Pilot Point First United Methodist

Church, 217 S. Church Street, Pilot Point, Texas, 76258. Reception and Model T stroll to follow. In lieu of flowers, please make a contribution in Hugo's name to the Pilot Point First United Methodist Church, or organization of your choice.

To send a flower arrangement to the family of Hugo Ernst Richter, Jr., please [click here](#) to visit our Sympathy Store.

# Tribute Wall

GL

“ *Such a precious man! I feel blessed that I got to meet him on April 29, 2017 while I was visiting from Denver. With his daughter, Kim, and cousin, Suzanne Wall, we went out to lunch. He did not want to be left behind. How fun to hear more of his memories. What a dear and special person - Hugo! I will miss writing him and getting his replies. With Love, Lori G*

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**Giesecke Lori** - August 22, 2018 at 12:00 AM

AB

“ *It sounds like he lived life to the fullest - what a wonderful legacy! I know you have lots of wonderful memories to make you smile - Love Anna Bevacqua*

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**Anna Bevacqua** - August 20, 2018 at 12:00 AM



“ *Hugo was such a good person and I really enjoyed spending so much time with him. Over the years he taught me many things and I enjoyed his stories he would tell me if we werent working on some old model t. Hugo I will surely miss you.*

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August 18, 2018 at 12:00 AM

HM

“ *What a special special man! He brought life and positivity to our lives, and we are forever thankful for the time we had with him! Praying for comfort and peace for all the family as you lay to rest a legacy of a man! Love you Hugo!*

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**Holly Mercer** - August 18, 2018 at 12:00 AM