

LEO S. BIELINSKI 1924 - 2017



Leo S. Bielinski, Lt. Col. U.S. Air Force Retired, Ph. D., age 93, passed away Tuesday, May 16, 2017. Funeral Mass: 2 p.m. Saturday at St. Barbara's Catholic Church located on New York Hill, Thurber, Texas. Burial: Follows at Thurber Cemetery. Leo will lie in state at the church beginning at 11 a.m. Saturday, prior to the mass with a Rosary at 1 p.m. Memorials: Can be made to Thurber Cemetery Association, Box 116, Mingus, TX 76463. Online He was born March 16, 1924, in Thurber Junction (Mingus), Texas, to Frank and Lottie Bielinski. He was a member of the Roman Catholic Church (Latin Rite), Retired Officers Association, 44th Bomb Group Association, Palo Pinto County Historical Commission, Thurber Cemetery Association, Polish Genealogical Society of Texas (PGST) and the Polish Nobility Association. He graduated from Mingus High School in 1941. From 1942 to 1943, he worked at the "Bomber Plant" in Fort Worth. In February 1943, he joined the AAF as a Flying Cadet. He earned his wings at Frederick Army Air Field in Fredrick, Okla., and trained in B-24s at Fort Worth Army Air Field in the summer of 1944. As a pilot, he was assigned to the 506th Bomb Squadron, 44th BG, and 8th AF in England in January 1945. By the War's end, he had flown 22 combat missions over Germany. On June 6, 2014, 69 years after the event, he was awarded France's highest medal, the Legion of Honor, for helping liberate France in WWII. Following WWII, he attended college under the GI Bill until recalled to AF active duty in 1949. After graduating from Air Force Meteorology School he served as Weather Officer and Pilot in Okinawa, North Africa, Libya, Italy and Bermuda. Among stateside duties, he was stationed at Perrin Air Force Base, Sherman, Texas, the Severe Weather Warning Center, Kansas City, the TIROS II Weather Satellite Team, Point Mugu Naval Base, CA and Langley AFB, Va. He received his B.S. in Meteorology from UCLA in 1954, and M.S. in Meteorology from St. Louis University in 1959 and a PhD in Secondary Education from North Texas State in 1973. After Air Force retirement in 1966, he taught for 20 years in Fort Worth, Arlington and Dallas Schools before retiring in 1986. In retirement, he cultivated pecans, did genealogical research, and worked toward preservation of his Thurber, Texas heritage, the nearby coal mining center of his youth. He was a local historian, lecturer and author of two books and many articles on Thurber. In 1995 he was the recipient of the Mrs. Percy Jones Award for Best Article in the West Texas Historical Association Yearbook. In 1996, he was cited by Governor George Bush for "Excellence In Preserving History." Leo, working with the Thurber Cemetery Association, helped restore the long abandoned cemetery where over 1100 lost graves were located and marked. Survivors: Wife of 54 years, Virginia; son Michael; grandchildren, Cliff, Anya and Mathew Bielinski; sisters, Dorothy and Celia; and several nephews and nieces.