



SYKES H. Clair

H. Clair Sykes, 88, of Roanoke, passed away July 28, 2015. He was a member of Virginia Heights Baptist Church where he served for many years as a deacon, sang in the sanctuary choir, and taught a men's Sunday School class. Mr. Sykes retired as Training Manager of the Roanoke General Office of New York Life Insurance Co. In retirement, he kept busy singing barbershop harmony with the Virginia Gentlemen chorus and as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, League of Older Americans' Meals on Wheels program, and tutoring at Virginia Heights Elementary School.

At age 18, he volunteered in the Navy and was in the Pacific on the USS Burdo when Japan surrendered their naval base at Sasebo as World War II ended just days after the bombing of the nearby city of Nagasaki. He received an Army ROTC commission upon graduation from Virginia Tech in 1949. Shortly before his marriage to Gaynell Powers in 1950, he was called to active duty in the Army when the Korean War erupted. Upon separation from service in 1952, he remained in the Army Active Reserve, serving primarily in the Second Brigade, 80th Division (Training) in Salem, retiring from 33 years of service as a colonel.

Mr. Sykes was a native of Clintwood, Va., the son of Avon and Alta Hay Sykes. His parents; his brother, Bonsall; his sister, Anita; and his granddaughter, Grace Lovegrove, preceded him in death. Surviving are his wife and love of 65 years, Gaynell Powers Sykes; three daughters and sons-in-law, Cheryl (Dr. Charles) Gilliland, of Roanoke, Clarissa "Lisa" (Richard) Lovegrove, of Roanoke, Anita (Thomas) Lisk, of Richmond; and son, Franklin Sykes, of Roanoke. Clair and Gaynell were blessed with seven grandchildren, Meredith (Holcomb) Eckel, Lauren Holcomb, Blake Holcomb, Grace Lovegrove (deceased), Spencer Lovegrove, Sarah Lisk, and Matthew Lisk, and stepgrandchildren Amy, Chuck, and Bobby Gilliland. He had six great-grandchildren, including Claire Gilliland, named in his honor. He also leaves his brother, Alton Sykes and wife, Beth, of Melbourne, Fla.; and two sisters and a brother-in-law, Carol Sykes Mays, of Amelia, and Rita (Kenneth) Bailey, of Abingdon; and several nieces and nephews.

The family will receive friends at Oakey's South Chapel on Friday, July 31, 2015, from 6 to 8 p.m. and 1 to 2 p.m. on Saturday, August 1, 2015. The funeral service will be held at Oakey's South Chapel at 2 p.m. with the Rev. Nelson Harris officiating. Interment will be private. Memorial donations may be made to Virginia Heights Baptist Church or the charity of your choice. Online condolences can be made at www.oakeys.com.

**Oakey's**

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