



Baen taught, did research in Army career

By Jennifer A. Luna, San Antonio Express-News : June 30, 2014

SAN ANTONIO — Growing up during the Great Depression, Spencer Roe “Rainbow” Baen learned how to save and live off of little resources, which in turn gave him an appreciation for education.

The San Antonio native, described by his family as a loving, brilliant and caring person, would spend most of his life as either a student or an educator.

Baen died May 30. He was 93.

A 1939 Jefferson High School graduate, Baen went on to attend Texas A&M University in College Station. Upon graduating in 1943 with a bachelor's degree in engineering, he was commissioned into the Army as a second lieutenant.

Amid embarking on what would become a 27-year military career, he began dating his first wife, Joyce Kirkland. The two knew each other in high school and were reacquainted in college. They married in the summer of 1944 and started a family the next year. They were married for 38 years.

Oldest son Peter Baen recalled his family traveling about 25 times during his father's career, and he remembered his parents' encouragement to expand their children's horizons.

“There are four words that still burn in my mind: 'Soak up the culture,’” he said.

In the Army, Spencer Baen earned a master's degree in electrical engineering and doctorates in mechanical engineering and electrical engineering from the California Institute of Technology.

He studied aerospace and rocket sciences, researched new technology and was a research instructor for the Army War College. Aside from being an instructor and researcher, Baen also worked in the Office of Research and Development at the Pentagon.

After retiring as a colonel in 1970, Baen and his wife retired in Bryan. Not far away from College Station, he began a second career as director for energy and mineral resources for the Texas Engineering Experiment Station at Texas A&M.

Baen's wife died in 1982 from heart problems. In 1984, he married Pat Castillon, whom he met through a friend. The two traveled around the world, and after 18 years of marriage, Castillon died in her sleep from a pulmonary embolism.

After residing in Bryan for a few more years, Baen decided to return to San Antonio for the final years of his life.

Although he was a busy man throughout his two careers, he always made time for family, Peter Baen said.

“He taught us to be an engaged and involved father to our own children,” he said.