



Preston Fobis Bridgewater Jr.

December 26, 1938 - May 8, 2026

Preston F. Bridgewater Jr., 87, passed away on May 8, 2026, at Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas, surrounded by his loved ones. He was a devoted father, grandfather, and great-grandfather who took immense pride in his family and offered unwavering support in all of their endeavors. The outpouring love of “Papa” or “Papa Ranch” cannot be replicated and missed dearly.

A proud native Texan, Preston was born on December 26, 1938, in Midland, Texas, to Johnnye (Preston) and Preston F. Bridgewater Sr. During his youth, he was a dedicated Midland High School Bulldog, playing offensive line on the varsity football team, where he was fondly known by the nickname “Jugbutt.” After graduating, he attended the University of Texas at Austin for a time, where he participated in the Air Force ROTC program. Following a return home and with persistent encouragement from his parents, Preston resumed his education at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

Although he enjoyed the camaraderie and social life of college, Preston’s true calling was aviation. He answered that call by enlisting in the United States Air Force. During the Vietnam War, he served as a UH-1F “Huey” pilot with the 606th Air Commando Squadron, stationed in Thailand. There, he flew numerous night and rescue missions, along with humanitarian operations. Preston was deeply proud of his service, and his grandchildren cherished

hearing his vivid stories of life in the air. Even in everyday life, his sense of mission stayed with him. No car ride was complete without recruiting passengers as his “navigator,” GPS notwithstanding.

Preston will be remembered for his quick wit, warm charm, and deep sense of adventure. He delighted in organizing family vacations, hunting and fishing trips, and countless “adventures,” always ensuring those around him experienced life to the fullest. His joyful outlook and unique perspective will be dearly missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his son Bret Bridgewater (Karen) of San Antonio, Texas; William Jackson (Christine) of Spring, Texas; grandson Dr. Chase Floyd (Ginny) of Dyersburg, Tennessee; granddaughters Samantha Layton of Austin, Texas, and Parker Jackson of Spring, Texas; great-granddaughter Towner “Towns” Floyd of Dyersburg, Tennessee; niece Angela Goff (Marion) of Lubbock, Texas; and nephew William Sanders Jr. (Leslie) of New Braunfels, Texas.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Johnnye and Preston Bridgewater; his sisters, Emily Jane Sanders of Midland, Texas, and Camille “Sisty” Bridgewater; his daughter, Kamala Bridgewater; his longtime partner, Donna Jackson; and his grandson, Preston Layton.

A celebration of Preston’s life will be at his favorite watering hole Big John’s Icehouse 12640 Briar Forest Dr, Houston, TX 77077 on June 12, 2026 from 4pm til 7pm.

Preston will be returned home to Midland during a private burial at a later date.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made in his honor to Special Olympics

Texas, an organization he deeply cared for.

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 12. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Big John's Icehouse
12640 Briar Forest Dr.
Houston, TX 77077

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Celebration of Life Banner*



Dettling Funeral Home - 2 hours ago