



Laurier Bernard McDonald Jr.

October 10, 2025

EDINBURG, TEXAS – Laurier Bernard McDonald, Jr. age 94, passed away Friday, October 10, 2025 in Edinburg, Texas. Mr. McDonald was born October 3, 1931 in Memphis, TN. His father was a British subject and, as such, Mr. McDonald likewise acquired the status of a British subject. He retained his British nationality until January 1, 1947 when he obtained Canadian citizenship. He continued to be a Canadian citizen until his 1949 enlistment in the U.S. Marine Corps, at which time he relinquished his Canadian citizenship. On April 17, 2009, his prior Canadian citizenship was fully restored, retroactive to October 3, 1931, by an Act of the Canadian Parliament at Ottawa. Mr. McDonald served from 1950-1953 on active duty with the U.S. Marine Corps and was discharged as a sergeant in August 1953. After the Korean War he enrolled at Texas A&I College at Kingsville, TX where he obtained his undergraduate degree in history. He was awarded membership in Alpha Chi, National Scholastic Honor Society and Phi Alpha Theta, National Honorary History Association. He then obtained his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Texas School of Law, Austin, TX and was appointed a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Following five years of service with the FBI, both domestically and foreign, he was unanimously selected by the judges of the United State District Court, Southern District of Texas to serve as the United States Commissioner for the Brownsville Division. At the time of his appointment, the position of The United States Commissioner was the oldest created judicial office within the federal judiciary.

The office was abolished by the U.S. Congress in 1971. Mr. McDonald was the last person to serve within Texas who carried the title of the “The United States Commissioner.” Mr. McDonald loved the spirit of the outdoors and for seven years, while attending college, was seasonally employed by the U.S. National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service as a Smokejumper and a U.S. National Park Service Ranger. It was during his tenure as a U.S. National Park Ranger at the Big Bend National Park of Texas that he met, Juanita Littleton, his future wife. Juanita herself was a veteran of service with the U.S. National Park Service Concessions, having served two seasons within the magnificent Mount McKinley National Park of Alaska and one season along the majestic seacoasts of beautiful Maine prior to being posted to the remote Big Bend National Park of Texas. Their first years of marriage were spent overseas, and upon their return to the United States they settled in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas...a location both had long admired. He was made a partner in the law firm of Pena & Leopold of Edinburg. Later the firm became known as Pena, McDonald, Prestia & Ornelas. His law specialty was the field of Immigration & Nationality law. During his long practice in the unique specialty of law he created many innovations. Within the Valley he is best known for the famous Rio Rico cases which involved the “Lost Americans,” who were a small number of persons who were born within a 455 acres tract of land geographically located totally within the State of Texas – but which – by quirk of history and geography, was also entirely surrounded by the Republic of Mexico and also situated wholly south of the Rio Grande River! After an eight-year legal dispute in the courts, Mr. McDonald established that the “Lost Americans” finally had been found. The court declared them to have been American citizens from the dates of their births, even though the land upon which they had been born had been, incorrectly, previously presumed by both the United States and Mexico to have been “Mexican sovereign territory.” He is cited in *Who’s Who in American Law – Marquise Who’s Who*, 1st-5 Editions; *Who’s Who in the South and Southwest – Marquise Who’s Who*, 14-17th Editions. During 1973, he was elected President of the Edinburg

Chamber of Commerce and remained an active member until his retirement from his legal practice on January 1, 2001. A common thread running throughout his entire life has been his enjoyment of “things historical and geographical.” In 1966, he accepted the chairmanship of the Hidalgo County Historical Survey Committee, later renamed by the Texas State Legislature as Hidalgo County Historical Commission, a post he held for five years. After his chairmanship expired, he continued to serve on the Commission for more than four decades. In 1967, following the destruction caused by Hurricane Beulah, Mr. McDonald joined a handful of similarly minded Valley historians within the hurricane-ravaged remains of the 1908 Hidalgo County jail, to bond together and swear to create, from “...within these shambles caused by the hurricane...” a museum of national importance. Today, that same, but now beautifully restored, derelict jail building has become... The Museum of South Texas History. As a Rotarian (“Paul Harris Fellow”) he was faithful in attendance for more than a third of a century enjoying immensely the camaraderie and enthusiasm of the membership. Mr. McDonald was preceded in death by his father, Laurier B. MacDonald, Sr., a Scot from Cape Breton Island and his Tennessee born mother, Mary Eva Covington McDonald. He is survived by his wife, Juanita Littleton McDonald of Edinburg; four children, James L. (Maria) McDonald of Alicante, Spain; Rebecca (Thomas) Hearn of League City, TX; John B. (Joy) McDonald of Edinburg; and Susan (Derek) Herring of Niederwald, TX and three grandsons and five granddaughters and three great-grandchildren. Funeral services have been entrusted to the care of Kreidler Funeral Home of McAllen, TX with burial at the Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery. Visitation will be on Wednesday, October 15, 2025 from 6:00pm-8:00pm. In lieu of floral remembrances, memorials can be made to the Museum of South Texas History.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **15**. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.

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McAllen, TX 78501

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<http://www.kreidlerfuneralhome.com/index.html>

Tribute Wall

LA

“ My grandfather was a Mexican-Jew, a descendant of Judah, and from one of King David's nephews. D. Espinoza was crippled from an accident, and Mr. L.B. McDonald, by the grace of God, Almighty, gave him work. This infused my Grandfather's heart, and his wife's heart, and his children's hearts with so much joy, for a good future. My grandfather went to be with The LORD, now in Heaven. Surely, they are having pleasant talks. ☁️

L. Espinoza, Kindle Author - February 08 at 12:21 AM

JV

“ Mr. McDonald was our neighbor for over 25 years and Tom and I were fortunate enough to listen to the history lessons that came our way. He was so thoughtful, kind, intelligent, and gave compliments out that would melt your heart. I had so much respect for him because he cared so much about the world around him, locally and globally. Tom and I are honored to have had him across the street from us. To the McDonald's-you will be prayed for and in our thoughts. May he rest in peace The Nevanen's Tom and Jo Yvonne

Jo Yvonne Villarreal-Nevanen - October 16, 2025 at 05:56 PM

RZ

“ Juanita and family,
Sorry for your loss of Mac. He was a great guy with tremendous talent.
May God be with you always.
Your entire family will remain in our prayers.
With deepest sympathy and Christian love
Ron Zipp†

Ronald D Zipp - October 15, 2025 at 03:19 PM

MC

“ *An awesome grandpa and father-in-law. Marine, smoke-jumper, park ranger, FBI agent, outstanding lawyer and great historian. We will always cherish his stories, his passion for preserving the history of the Valley and his numerous memorabilia. Always in our hearts and in our thoughts.*

From Spain, Jaume and María



María José Caturla - October 15, 2025 at 06:44 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc. - October 12, 2025 at 09:49 AM