



## William Vinson McLeod

September 28, 2024

William Vinson McLeod, always known as Vinson, died on Saturday, September 28, in hospice care at McAllen Medical Center at the age of 84. He had been severely disabled since last November and had been living in the Texas State Veterans' Home prior to his final hospitalization. His wife, Cory Raymond, and all three of his sons were with him at his bedside as he made his transition comfortably and peacefully, surrounded by love.

A native McAllenite, Vinson was born on July 24, 1940, when McAllen was more orange groves than housing developments. He was the first-born child of Helen Manning McLeod and William Angus McLeod, Jr. He was often proudly referred to as simply "the boy," even though Helen had brought two older half-brothers, Billy and Jerry, with her when she married Angus.

Angus was an attorney who often accepted fresh produce or other non-monetary payment for his services. As a result, the McLeod "homestead" was pretty basic. Vinson and five brothers shared one room. Sister Martha got her own room. The family shared one bathroom. All this togetherness was without the benefit of AC. Helen was a homemaker and later a high-school teacher. Being a mother to seven children kept her pretty busy while her family was young, but both Angus and Helen devoted much of their time and energy to First Presbyterian Church, McAllen.

The church was a major influence on the early lives of Vinson and his siblings. It continued to be an important part of his life until his death. He always described his philosophy as “a simple faith.” He believed in the goodness of all people, no matter what their religion. Service to others was ingrained in him at an early age and that was a guiding principle for him, always. He credited his ability to be a leader and speak with ease and confidence in front of a large audience with his early experiences in the church’s youth group.

Vinson attended McAllen High School, where one of the first disappointments of his life overtook him: he wasn’t a very good football player. After a less-than-stellar performance in a football game, he came home distraught. He remembers his dad, whose arthritis made it difficult for him to fully open his hands, rubbing his temples gently with his knuckles and telling him, “Vinson, I know it doesn’t seem like it now, but one day, you will realize that your performance on the football field has nothing to do with the kind of man you are.” Vinson never forgot that. Even though he didn’t excel at the game, he never lost his love of watching it.

He started college at Texas A&M but transferred to Baylor after he was introduced to a pretty young red-haired woman named Barbara Cooke, who was attending the latter college. Hailing from Memphis, TN, Barbara had always told her friends that she dreamed of marrying a man from Texas. In 1961, when they were both 21, Vinson was delighted to make Barbara’s dream come true.

Vinson served five years in the U.S. Air Force from 1963 through 1967, serving in Korea during the Viet Nam era, and, afterward, in various stateside assignments. He attained the rank of Captain.

When he was discharged, he joined Barbara and their first son, Vins, Jr. in Memphis, where Vinson was then employed by the H.L. Cooke Tile Company,

owned by Barbara's father.

In 1972, the young family, which had now grown to include sons David and John, moved to McAllen, where Vinson went into business with his mother, who operated a small book store.

Upon returning to McAllen, Vinson rejoined The First Presbyterian Church, and Barbara, a lifelong Baptist, joined too. They raised their boys in the church where they developed strong values and relationships that formed a solid foundation for successful lives.

In 1974, Vinson and his brother Jim were inspired to begin selling Spanish language books to local schools, where the books were very successful. By 1978, the demand for educational books, both in English and Spanish, led the McLeod family to open the Rio Grande Book Company. In addition to books, they sold educational supplies to teachers all over The Valley and beyond. Vinson, Barbara, Helen, Jim and his wife Mary Cloud, and all three sons were employed at one time or the other at the store, as well as quite a few family friends, and even a few non-relatives. Barbara taught elementary school during some of these years.

Both Barbara and Vinson were active in the church. Vinson was steeped in church history and received the high honor of serving as one of the few, if not the only, non-Phd member of the Presbyterian Church's National Historical Committee. He was so pleased when other members of the committee slipped and called him Doctor McLeod.

One of his proudest accomplishments was authoring "A Century of Faith" covering First Presbyterian's first hundred years. He spent months researching and released a new chapter every week in the church bulletin.

The completed book was given to the congregation as part of the church's centennial celebration in the fall of 2008. Rich in detail and church lore, the book was a big hit.

Vinson and Barbara had many close friendships in their years at the church. One of the strongest was with the Seale family, Jan and Carl and their sons Ansen, Erren and Avrel, who were close to the McLeod boys in age. Jan and Avrel were present during Vinson's final hours, continuing, for close to a half century, their love and support for the McLeod family.

At one time, Vinson had a serious but healthy habit—running every day for twenty years, ending on December 31, 1998. Rain or shine, home or away, well or sick, Vinson was out there, getting attacked by irate mockingbirds or yelled at by passing motorists. He wasn't fast but, as in all things, he was faithful.

Vinson suffered a stroke in 2006, which left him with residual weakness on his right side. This required him to use a rather sporty candy-apple red Rollator walker, as recommended by Carl Seale, thereafter. Even though disabled, he continued to serve his church and community for many more years.

Vinson was one of the longest serving members of the McAllen Rotary Club, serving one term as club president and as Executive Secretary for several years, working closely with each president and Rotary Board, before he "retired" to pursue other interests.

He was one of the founders of Su Casa de Esperanza, in Las Milpas, which provides early childhood education, prenatal education for mothers, and instruction to develop skills women could use to provide income for their families. He was also instrumental in the early days of Comunidades Unidas Pro Salud, created to provide health care for the poor south of the border. He

was active in both non-profits for many years.

Vinson and Barbara were married for thirty-six years when she developed breast cancer and died in 1997.

After he closed the Rio Grande Book Company in 1999, he became a grant writer for The Salvation Army and for Su Casa.

Vinson loved talking to people and was a great listener. His office at the Rio Grande Book Company provided the opportunity for pastors, fellow-businessmen, and other community leaders to visit, swap stories, discuss problems, and, most often, share laughter. So many pastors came to visit him at the store that he was known as the “pastors’ pastor”.

Vinson is survived by his wife of fourteen years, Cory Raymond, sons Vins, Jr., David, and his wife Lisa, their sons Luke and Drew, and John and his wife Sandra, and their son, Connor. He’s also survived by his brothers: Jim and his wife Mary Ann, John and his wife Betty, Angus III, and his wife Gwen, and sister, Martha Doffing and her husband Larry. He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews and their children. He was a dedicated cat-watcher and provided a forever home for more than a few felines over the years, several of whom survived him. Buddy was always his favorite.

There will be a private graveside service for the family. The memorial service will be Saturday October 26th at 2PM at First Presbyterian Church McAllen, 104 S. 12th St. McAllen, with a reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to The First Presbyterian Church of McAllen P.O. Box 1029, McAllen, TX 78505 or Su Casa de Esperanza, P.O. Box 1333, Pharr, TX 78577-1333. Arrangements are being

handled by the Kreidler Funeral Home 956-686-0234.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

OCT **26**. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church McAllen

# Tribute Wall

GC

“ My deepest condolences to the Mcloud Family. Vince was a good person, I was very blessed to have worked with him in the Rio Grande Book Company. I know it's been over 1 year, I was thinking of him today and looked him up to find out he was no longer with us. May he RIP sending my condolences and prayers to the family.  
Genaro Castillo 🙏🙏

Genaro Castillo - October 11, 2025 at 08:55 PM

MW

“ This world is a better place because Vinson lived and loved and laughed in it. He was a remarkable man. I am a better person because i knew him and Jim McLeod was blessed to tag along in his footsteps. Jim adored Vinson.

Mary Ann Wycoff - October 27, 2024 at 07:46 AM

PP

“ Deepest condolences to the McLeod family on the loss of Vinson.



Patricia L Power - October 26, 2024 at 08:59 AM