



Robert J. Irvine

December 25, 1939 - December 7, 2020

Bob was born in Portland, OR, where he lived his early years. He attended 1st and 2nd grade at Gabel Country Day School, and 3rd and 4th grades at Llewellyn Elementary School. The family moved to Vancouver, WA, where he attended Washington Elementary, Shumway Jr. High, and graduated from Hudson's Bay High School in 1957.

Growing up in Vancouver, and perhaps influenced by his father, he became very interested in flying. He started taking flying lessons when he was 13 at Evergreen Field in East Vancouver, where he could ride his bike to work as a line boy and mechanic, and be around the airplanes.

Bob soloed in an Aeronca Champ on his 16th birthday, and earned his Private Pilot's license just after his 17th birthday, and he didn't even have a driver's license yet!

Upon a move to Tacoma after graduation, he worked briefly at a supermarket, then at Boeing Field in both Seattle and Auburn, and of course, continued his flying. During this time he was

very involved with Civil Air Patrol where he qualified at the time as the only CAP Cadet Search and Rescue pilot in a Stinson L-5 and an Aeronca L-16. He was a charter member of the Rainier Skydivers out of Thun Field in Puyallup, where he did 19 jumps. He developed friendships from these groups that lasted his entire lifetime.

Bob had quite an extensive military career. He started out at Aviation Cadet Primary Basic Navigator Training, as Pilot training had been shut down, in April 1960, at Harlingen AFB, TX, followed by navigator bombardier training, survival training, and combat crew training. He was stationed at Whiteman AFB in MO with SAC as a radar/bombardier on B-47s, after which he was stationed at various bases. Bob married Emilie Patterson in 1963 at the Whiteman AFB Chapel. They later had two children, Robert, Jr. born in 1965, and Amelia Anne born in 1967.

Later in 1967, he trained as a reconnaissance systems officer on the SR-71 at Beale AFB, CA, until funds were cut for that program, after which he moved to TAC and trained as a weapons systems officer on F-4s. He spent a year stationed with the 435th Tactical Fighter Squadron based in Ubon, Thailand, where he had 223 missions over Laos and North Viet Nam, and was awarded 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 17 Air Medals. After returning to MacDill AFB, FL

in 1973, he separated from the Air Force to pursue a civilian flying career.

He had various flying jobs: crop dusting in a Stearman, flying cargo carriers, and sightseeing

tours over the Grand Canyon in a DC-3. He then moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where he flew

B-737's for Air Saudia from 1976-80. Back in the states he flew B-737's for PSA, which later

became US Airways. He flew numerous aircraft all over the states. He also helped in a 29 year

project restoring a British Hawker Hurricane, famous in the Battle of Britain, and was the first to

see how well of a job they'd done, taking it for a spin out of Pearson Airpark in Vancouver,WA!

Obvious airshows followed that feat. After a brief retirement, he worked for what is now known

as Netjets, flying Cessna Citation X's for private owners, where he flew quite a few notable

passengers. He continued flying privately for a number of years, including Stearmans and T-6

Texans, participating in airshows, and just flying to meet up with pilot buddies somewhere for

lunch. He was also a long standing member of the elite Quiet Birdmen organization.

He retired from flying after 55 years, logging roughly 28,000 hours, and "lots of fun". He

became a member of the Contest Committee in Rules Compliance, for the Reno National

Championship Air Races, officiating for 9 years. In December of 2015 he was

presented the
Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award for 50 years of Safe Aircraft Operations.
His memoirs show
he had stick time in 103 different aircraft, and rode in yet another 46 aircraft!

Bob was very interested in WWII history and had collected quite an extensive library. He'd
owned a DC-3 that was later sold and rebuilt. He and 10 others flew it from
Aurora, OR to
Normandy, France for the 75th anniversary of D-Day in June of 2019, a trip of
a lifetime for him.

He enjoyed traveling, especially Italy. He had also taken his 2 children to
Switzerland for hiking.

He followed Formula 1 auto racing for years, and walked the entire (2mi.!)
track in Monte Carlo

3 times with his sister in 2010. He'd owned a 1938 chopped Pontiac that he
enjoyed taking to
cruise-ins, and enjoyed his BMW's of which he'd owned 4 over the years. He
was proud of his
Scottish heritage and occasionally enjoyed dressing in his kilt and full regalia.

There are not many like Bob that can say: "I've never worked a day in my life".
Quite a ride, Bob. You will be sorely missed by the many whose lives you
have touched.

Personal note: As his only sibling, Bob and I enjoyed hiking, and did most all
of the trails in the
Columbia River Gorge at least twice, climbed Mt. St. Helens in 2000, did
many trips in his cars,
and enjoyed golfing with friends, and traveling to Hawaii. I'm not really sure he
liked the white

water rafting trip I talked him into going on though! I appreciate his intelligence and expertise, and especially for the entry in my own log book in 1999, signed by him as my CFI, in the same plane he had solo'd in, gotten his private license in, and I was his first passenger in, in 1957. Fortunately, as adults, we did a good job of making up for our 10 year age difference. :)

After dealing with diabetes for years, Bob suffered a stroke while getting ready to leave for the Reno Air Races on Sept. 7, 2019. As a result, he was unable to walk, or to speak much, and spent 15 months in a rehab facility in Vancouver. Covid-19 didn't help, as he could not have visitors his last 9 months, except for just a couple brief visits, and his sister accompanying him to the VA hospital, but he had great care. Who knew those would be cherished moments?

We are awaiting notification of his acceptance at Arlington National Cemetery! There will also be a place for him at the top of Chinook Pass at Tipsoo Lake, with his mom and some relatives' remains. At both places, there will definitely be "a coin thrown on the grass".

When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return. Leonardo de Vinci

Tribute Wall

NH

“ Bob and I flew together many times before we both retired, and it was always a pleasure to be with him. He was an outstanding pilot, yet a very modest person. I am so grateful that I got to know him. He will be missed.

Nick Hager - March 27, 2021 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ We lost a great friend, neighbor and patriot when Bob made his flight to the heavens. Our grandkids are especially going to miss him. I loved talking with him about the military, flying and life in general. We could always count on seeing him in the evenings pointing out the space station as it went overhead. I am so happy he was able to fly to Europe to celebrate the D-Day reenactment a few years ago. Good job and good life Bob. You will be missed but not forgotten. John & Mary Robinson

John Robinson - December 21, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ John Robinson lit a candle in memory of Robert J. Irvine



John Robinson - December 21, 2020 at 12:00 AM