



Robert Ervin Pontius

November 5, 1939 - September 13, 2020

Col. Robert Ervin “Bob” Pontius, USAF Ret., age 80, passed peacefully from this life and into Heaven on September 13, 2020. Bob will be laid to rest at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery, Killeen, Texas.

Bob lived a life of service and adventure, and was a man of God, a devoted husband and father, a respected and decorated Air Force officer, patriot, and a curious learner and explorer.

Bob was born in Warsaw, Indiana, on Nov. 5, 1939, the son of Everett and Cleo Pontius, and passed away peacefully at home in Austin, Texas, on September 13, 2020.

Bob entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in 1973 while stationed in Oslo, Norway. Bob was, before all else, a man of God. With a wisdom and kindness gifted from God, Bob was spiritual mentor and example to many. In a life full of adventure and joy, Bob’s greatest joy was in the Holy Spirit. Bob loved to teach Sunday school and speak and pray for large groups, luncheons, and classes, especially the Baptism in the Holy Spirit classes. Bob served as Deacon under 4 different pastors and was always the “go-to guy” who could be relied upon to never say no when asked to do anything. Bob loved to study the Bible, attend prayer meetings, and share his insights with others. Bob was truly a “gentle man” – kind and caring and always willing to place others before himself. Second only to his love of God, Bob’s greatest love and kindness was towards his wife and two treasured sons.

A devoted and loving husband and father, Bob is survived by his beloved wife of 56 years, Joanne; two sons, Robert Everett Pontius of Gladstone, Michigan and Erik Pontius of Austin, Texas; a brother, William “Bill” Pontius of Agoura Hills, California; and precious grandchildren Robbie, Adira, and Ellie Pontius of Gladstone, Michigan. Bob will always be remembered by his sons for his playfulness, consistent loving support, and sacrificial giving, including his design and construction of multiple tree-houses, “forts,” and skateboard “half-pipes,” frequent hikes and Nordic skiing trips, camping, stargazing, even

an entire Saturday driving around Texas “chasing snow” to give the family a glimpse of a rare reported flurry. Bob often shared his sense of adventure with his family resulting in many spontaneous quests, such as the time, while stationed in Germany, when Bob woke the family early with the imperative: “let’s see how many countries we can drive through in one day”.

A 30-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Bob was awarded the Legion of Merit for “exceptionally meritorious conduct” and innovations leading to major contributions to the enhancement of strategic air defense in the eastern half of the continental United States. Bob also completed two tours in Vietnam and numerous other tours of duty in which he served his country with distinction. Colonel Pontius was beloved of his “troops” and was always quick to honor those who worked for him as much as he honored those for whom he worked. Bob’s sons recall that one key lesson from Dad was that job one was to “make your boss look good”. Always an innovator, Colonel Bob’s citation for the Legion of Merit includes “innovation” more than any other word, reflecting a strength in innovative thinking that permeated Bob’s professional and personal life. Both sons, Rob and Erik, credit their Dad with imparting an intense interest in creativity and innovation modeled after Bob’s passion for coming up with creative solutions in any situation.

Bob was an avid explorer and was endlessly filled with the wonder of God’s creation. In fact, Joanne’s nickname for Bob from their earliest days was “The Intrepid Explorer.” Those who knew him know that Bob loved a “view”. Bob was a man who loved and appreciated transcendent beauty, including landscapes and scenic vistas but more than anything else the love of his life, Joanne. Music was an essential in Bob’s life and the family always said that it was his “heartbeat” because it was a constant accompaniment every minute Bob was in the house. In later years, Bob became a sailboat enthusiast and he and Joanne spent many days mastering the art of sailing in area lakes, living out his oft-quoted passage from *The Wind in the Willows*: “There’s nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as messing about in boats.”

As a curious auto-didact, voracious reader and a “man of books,” Bob was always learning something about such diverse topics as mathematics, computer science, Biblical studies, astronomy, history of science, or the latest technology. Bob’s formal education, including an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering, a Master’s Degree in Business Administration, and a Master’s Degree in Computer Science were only a prelude to the vast learning he acquired on his own. Bob’s sons often received the gift of exceptionally apt books from Bob: Rob received the 18th century inventor tome “*The Lunar Men*” and all of the boys bonded over books by Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov, Sir. Arthur Conan Doyle, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and many, many others. Rob and Bob

jointly immersed themselves in the entire extensive Patrick O'Brian "Master and Commander" (Aubrey-Maturin) series and Erik and Bob shared love of Verne's "Mysterious Island". Both boys love science fiction as a result of their Dad's influence. Bob imparted a true love of learning in his sons and others by his example and by his joyful embrace of reading. An early adopter of computer technology, Bob introduced the family to their first personal computer (a Radio Shack TRS-80) which perhaps led to both of his sons being gifted with facility with computer technology in its early days.

Bob loved "adventure," whether it was climbing mountains in Norway, exploring caves, experimenting with science and the latest technology, or recreating a 1960 college road trip (following his original journal) through Canada with Joanne 50 years later in 2010. In fact, everything seemed to be an adventure for Bob, even the toughest situations, and he embarked on all of his adventures with cheerful, joyful excitement and a twinkle in his eye.

Bob will be missed but we are all comforted in the knowledge that he has gone on to his most exciting adventure yet – his eternal reward in Heaven.

Events

SEP 16 **Viewing** 06:00AM - 08:00PM

GT Austin
2700 Northland Dr, Austin, Austin, TX, US, 78756

SEP 17 **Funeral Mass** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

GT Austin
2700 Northland Dr, Austin, Austin, TX, US, 78756

SEP 17 **Graveside Service** 03:00PM

Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery
11463 State Highway 195, Killeen, TX, US, 76542