

Robert Smith Blackwood



Fresno, California - Bob Blackwood was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who will be remembered for his hearty laugh, big hugs, and bad dad jokes. He loved to fly, sing, and pursue his lifelong passion of golf.

Born March 27, 1937, in Beaver Falls, PA, young Bobby learned to play golf starting at age 5 at his grandfather's Blackhawk Golf Course. His dad would drop him off at Blackhawk on his way to work during summers. Bob helped his grandfather build nine holes of the course and would often play more than one round in a day. By the time he was thirteen he had a single-digit handicap, and he went on to hit a hole-in-one six different times. In his early 70s and 80s he could shoot his age on the course.

Raised during World War II, Bob left Beaver Falls High School to put his love for flying and his country to work. He attended Culver Military Academy in Indiana and Bullis Prep School in Potomac, Maryland to earn acceptance to the U.S. Naval Academy.

Though his career was primarily as a navigator in the Air Force, Bob's Naval Academy years were formative and important to him. He loved singing in the Naval Academy Choir and playing on the golf team. He completed a B.S. in mathematics with a minor in physics at Mount Union College and entered the U.S. Air Force in 1960. He married Eileen Russell that same year and in 1968 their daughter Ann was born.

Bob served his country honorably during a long career in the Air Force. He retired in 1982 with the rank of Major after serving 28 months in Viet Nam and flying 126 combat missions.

Retiring from the Air Force in his 40s allowed Bob to be fully present during Ann's high school years, loading instruments onto trucks for the Merced Marching 100 and singing bass in a barbershop quartet alongside her in a high school production of Music Man. Bob's love of music, community and his daughter led him to meet Darlene McAfee through their involvement in the band boosters and to remarry into a large family he loved.

Bob didn't expect to live to 84, and he was grateful for the people and experiences in his long life. He didn't waste time with pretense, so if you had a relationship with him, you knew where you stood. His booming voice belied a soft heart, and when he said grace before a meal, he couldn't get through it without shedding tears of gratitude.

Bob died at home after a good, long life and will be missed by his wife of 33 years, Darlene; his daughter, Ann, stepsons Mark, Eric, Adam and Andrew McAfee, four daughters-in-law, eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Nieces and nephews will remember him as a fun uncle who doled out root beer barrels and mint chocolates, and as the last of his gregarious siblings – Veo, Jack, and Marion, who were predeceased by their parents, Veo and Gertrude Blackwood.