

David "Dave" Leroy Patton MARCH 31, 1931 – APRIL 6, 2022 (91)



David "Dave" Leroy Patton departed on his "final flight" on April 6, 2022, after 91 years of an amazing life. Dave was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of a World War I & II veteran father and a loving mother, where he developed his early sense of adventure. Before graduating high school, he enlisted in and served four years in the Army National Guard. However, Dave knew that he was meant to fly, so in 1952 he enlisted in the United States Air Force, initially as an airplane refueling assistant crew chief. With two years of college, he was selected for an Air Force pilot training program, and at the age of 23, earned his wings and a second lieutenant commission in the US Air Force, and became an F-84F fighter pilot.

Simultaneously with his commission, Dave proposed to his long-standing girlfriend, 19-year-old Jean Louise Hibbs. Jean's father reluctantly gave his daughter's hand to the man who dug holes in his front yard with his powerful hot rod car. They were married in Baltimore, and soon after the wedding, Jean left nursing school to support Dave in his first assignment.

The Air Force determined they needed pilots for the rapidly growing Strategic Air Command, and Dave transitioned to the RB-47, flying reconnaissance missions from forward bases in Tripoli, Libya, and Morocco. His superior flying abilities were noticed, and he was recruited into the highly secretive U-2 reconnaissance program, flying one of the most challenging single pilot planes in the Air Force (the U-2), conducting classified missions in support of the Cold War and Vietnam. He earned the "Air Medal" in 1967, and the "Distinguished Flying Cross" in 1968 for "flying extremely hazardous missions which displayed outstanding airmanship and courage, and secured intelligence information of vital importance to the nation's security". Following six years flying the U-2, Dave went on to serve in multiple assignments to include Vice Commander of Strategic Air Command's 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (Offutt AFB, NE), and Commander of the 43rd Strategic Wing (Andersen AFB, Guam). He then served in the Pentagon as Deputy Director for Operations and Readiness at Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. Following his Pentagon assignment, Dave commanded the 4th Air Division (F.E. Warren AFB, WY), and then was Commander of our nation's Civil Air Patrol at Maxwell AFB, AL. Dave retired from the Air Force in 1984 as a Brigadier General.

Dave's love for flying never stopped. He followed his Air Force retirement with another career as an American Airlines instructor, before finally retiring from the airlines in 2001. He continued to fly in support of local Civil Air Patrol missions for years after that. Dave then focused on attempting to repay his wife Jean for the years of dedicated service she provided in support of his career and children, recognizing that throughout their married life, the Nation's needs had taken precedence. Together they built homes and enjoyed life in Colorado Springs, CO and Tucson, AZ. In his final years, he moved closer to his children and grandchildren in Omaha, NE.

Dave was preceded in death by his parents and granddaughter, Molly. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Jean; his children, Mark (Ellen) Patton, CAPT USN (ret), Teri (Ross) Patton-Rich, and Scott (Susan) Patton, Col USAF (ret); and a legacy of 12 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren (so far). He is loved and will be missed. In lieu of flowers, the family requests you feel free to donate to the Air Force Assistance Fund, or the charity of your choice.

Dave will receive military honors, and be inurned at the Omaha National Cemetery at 1100 CT on Thursday, 19 May 2022.