

Lt Col (ret) William R Bowker
January 11, 1925-January 30, 2025

Retired Air Force Lt Colonel William Richard "Bill" Bowker passed away peacefully on January 30, 2025, in Milwaukie, Oregon. Bill Bowker had just turned 100 years old and had a wonderful birthday party with his immediate family and friends. Bill was born in Portland, Oregon on January 11, 1925 to George Harold Bowker and Edna Marie Bryant.

In August of 1944 Bill received his Pilot's Wings from the United States Air Force. Upon graduation he was assigned to a base in Florida for advanced training. In the spring of 1945, he was assigned to a flight group in England. Bill received training in flying the P-51 Mustang Fighter plane. This plane was the most advanced fighter aircraft in use by the United States. In 1946 Bill decided to leave the service and return home to Portland, Oregon where he was married to Jean Lund. Bill and Jean were married for 74 years before Jean passed on August 28, 2020. Bill and Jean were high school sweethearts even though Jean attended Cleveland High School and Bill attended Washington High School in Portland.



Bill then decided to join the Air Force Reserves to remain proficient in flying and flew the T-6, the same plane he had last flown in advanced flying school. Bill spent two weeks every summer on Active Duty at McCord Air Force Base in Tacoma, WA. In October of 1950 Bill was recalled to fulltime active duty and reported to San Angelo, Texas.

In the spring of 1954 Bill received orders to report to Korea to serve in the Korean War. The war was winding down at that point. Bill was assigned to help retrain the Japanese Air Force. Bill, Jean and their two children Larry and Dianna spent two years in Japan. Bill's next assignment was in January 1957 at the airbase in Topeka, Kansas. He joined the 55th Recon Wing at Forbes Air Force Base. The duty of this unit, which had three squadrons consisted of Weather, Photo and Electronics warfare aircraft. It was at this time Bill started flying the B-47.

Bill soon became involved with the Cuban Missile Crisis. This operation required daily flights flown jointly with a U-2 spy plane. In 1962 the Russians were putting missiles in Cuba to threaten the United States. In March of 1967 Bill flew the last flight to Cuba. Most of the crew members that had time to put in before retirement went to the SAC unit at Omaha until they finished active duty.

On June 1st, 1967, Bill and Jean left Kansas and returned home again to Milwaukie, Oregon. Larry had just graduated from Washburn Rural High School in Kansas and Dianna attended Clackamas High School. Bill retired from the Air Force as a Lt Colonel with over 8,000 flying hours.

After retirement from the Air Force, Bill served as a corporate pilot for a couple of local Portland corporations and served a term as Oregon Funeral Home inspector. Bill and Jean enjoyed traveling all over the country in their Airstream travel trailer. Bill is survived by his two children, Larry Bowker (Denise) and Dianna Schumacher (Chuck). Bill had four grandchildren, four great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren. Bill will be laid to rest at Veteran's Memorial Cemetery on Mount Scott in Happy Valley next to Jean. A life well lived and proud Air Force retiree.

