

William Joseph Bima Jr.,  
August 31, 1937 – June  
2, 2026.

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Lt. Col. William “Bill” Joseph Bima Jr., USAF (Ret.), who peacefully departed this life on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at the age of 88.

Born on August 31, 1937, in West Frankfort, Illinois, to William Joseph Bima Sr. and Manie (Bollero) Bima, Bill grew up in Christopher, Illinois. While attending Southern Illinois University, he met Rosavone “Rose” Faye Ator on a blind date. They married on July 21, 1960, and shared 66 wonderful years together. Bill graduated from Southern Illinois University in August 1959 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chemistry.



Bill dedicated more than 21 years to the United States Air Force, entering duty in March 1959 and retiring July 1980. A highly skilled pilot and respected leader, he served as Squadron Commander of the 343rd Reconnaissance Squadron and as Aircraft Commander in the 82nd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron. He also flew as a pilot in the elite USAF Big Safari / Rivet Joint program from 1973 to 1976. As Squadron Commander of the 343rd, Bill was known for genuinely caring for those under his command. His crew respected and appreciated his leadership, integrity, and sense of humor, and the affection they held for him was clear in the good-natured send-off he received when he moved on from command. While serving on active duty, he earned a Master of Science degree in Systems Management through the University of Southern California’s Institute of Safety and Systems Management extension program. His distinguished service was recognized with numerous awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Medal with eight Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Vietnam Service Medal with eight Bronze Stars.

Following his retirement from the Air Force, Bill continued his passion for aviation as Project Manager and Chief Pilot for The Bionetics Corporation under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aviation Contract, flying the aircraft N55CE. Over the course of his aviation career spanning more than four decades in the Air Force and as a professional pilot, Bill logged over 20,000 flight hours. He generously shared his knowledge and love of flying with others. The skies were never just a workplace for Bill, they were like a second home to him.

An avid photographer from an early age, Bill always had a camera nearby and captured thousands of images of the people and moments he cherished. He was an enthusiastic do-it-yourselfer who could fix or build almost anything, and he generously shared his skills by helping his children and sons-in-law with projects both big and small. He was also a passionate woodworker and loved nothing more than time spent fishing.

Above all else, Bill was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Family was the center of his life. He was known for his steady presence, quiet strength, sense of humor, and unwavering dedication to those he loved. He often shared his favorite pilot's wisdom: "A superior pilot uses his superior judgement to avoid those situations which require the use of his superior skill!!" After fully retiring, he had business cards printed that read "Retired Aviator" with that quote on the back, a reflection he enjoyed sharing with others.

Bill is survived by his beloved wife, Rose; his children, Theresa M. Reeves (Arnold) of Gretna, Nebraska, William "Joe" Joseph Bima III (Christine) of Papillion, Nebraska, and Michele K. Henning (Blake) of Missoula, Montana; his granddaughters, Sara Hawkins (Eddy), Jessica Rothgeb (Tory), Hunter Schneiderheinz (Tucker), and Sophia Bima; and his great-granddaughters, Hayden and Parker Hawkins. He is also survived by beloved nieces and a nephew.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his twin sister, Wilma Greenlee.

Bill's legacy of service, integrity, and devotion to family will continue to inspire all who knew him. Though he has completed his final flight, his memory will forever live in the hearts of those who loved him.

Visitation will be held on Monday, June 15, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at Kahler-Dolce Mortuary, 441 N. Washington Street, Papillion, Nebraska, followed by a Vigil Service at 6:00 p.m.

Funeral Mass with military honors will be celebrated on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Columbkille Catholic Church in Papillion, followed by interment with military honors at Cedar Dale Cemetery.

Fair winds and following skies, Lt. Col. Bima. Your watch has ended, but your legacy lives on.