

# Vale Robert “Bob” William Howe



*Bob's family would like to thank you for your attendance today, and for your love and support at this difficult time.*

Please join us for music and light refreshments to celebrate Bob's life at The Burns Club, 28 Kett Street, Kambah from 3.30pm.

## CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF



## Robert W Howe

Wing Commander, MID (Retired)

**10 January 1940 – 14 August 2026**

Chapel of Norwood Park Crematorium,

Friday, 4 September 2026 at 1:30pm.

## ORDER OF SERVICE

### COMMENCEMENT MUSIC

*Brothers in Arms by Dire Straits*

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

*Officiant: Greg Martin*

### Eulogy 1

*Dr Mark Lax OAM, CSM*

### Eulogy 2

*Nikki Stapleton*

### Eulogy 3

*Rob Howe*

### REFLECTION

*I Get Around by The Beach Boys*

*End of the Line by The Travelling Wilburys*

### COMMITTAL

*Round Midnight by Miles Davis*

### CLOSING MUSIC

*Time to Say Goodbye by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman*





*Bob (right) in his maritime days with fellow 10 Squadron member, pilot Robin Page in front of a Mk31 (long-nosed) Lincoln*

## Eulogy by Dr (Air Commodore Ret'd) Mark Lax OAM, CSM

Robert William Howe, Bob to us, was one of those rare people. Why? First, he was born and raised in Canberra whereas most, like me, are blow ins. Second, he was a true gentleman in every sense of the word. And third, he was a friend and mentor to many of us – a role he put his heart into.

Born in 1940 and growing up here in the 1950s, Bob was inspired by stories of his Uncle Max, an Air Force World War II bomber pilot. Living in Reid, he regularly watched the World War Two Hudson bombers fly out of Fairbairn on their training flights. Not surprisingly, he joined the Air Training Corps as soon as he could and this set the scene for his future Air Force career.

In 1957, Bob was selected for entry into the prestigious RAAF College at Point Cook, and upon graduation, was posted to the School of Air Navigation at East Sale to train as an aircraft navigator. We used to joke that while the pilots rowed the boat, we navigators shot the ducks.

His first flying tour was with No 10 Squadron in Townsville, initially guiding the rather odd looking long-nosed Lincoln four engined bomber, a large ungainly aircraft much like Lancaster G-for George in the AWM. Then followed a tour on the somewhat better looking Neptune maritime patrol aircraft. As young lads, we all thought you could never get the girls if your aircraft was ugly – the Neppy was a step up.

It was while in Townsville that he met an airline hostess, Diana, who became his future wife and they would spend 60 years together before her passing a few years ago. They would have two children, Robert and Nicole who are with us today and two grandchildren Samuel and Zara.

With further specialist training, he moved onto the Canberra jet bomber, the most advanced type at the time. His skills were recognised as he soon found he was instructing novice crews on how to operate the aircraft, until his turn came to be called up for overseas wartime duty in May 1969. It would be Vietnam where at 29, he would soon become the Squadron's Bombing Leader.

After a year flying 260 operational bombing missions with No 2 Squadron, he transferred back to Amberley in Queensland to fly the Phantom jet fighter. This was our interim fighter/bomber while we awaited the arrival of the F-111. Much to his chagrin, Bob never got the chance to fly F-111. His knowledge and skills were needed by the RAAF elsewhere.

His ground-based staff appointments included three years as Weapons Systems Staff Officer with the Office of the Air Attaché in Washington USA, having before-hand completed a year-long specialist Aerosystems Course in the UK with the Royal Air Force.

In 1975, Bob returned to his hometown, to run the RAAF's weapons acquisition projects and exercise his new-found skills in systems, weapons and complex project management before retiring in 1978 as a Wing Commander.

I might add that during his RAAF service he regularly played with the local first grade and inter-service cricket, hockey and squash teams at various locations.

Although retired from the RAAF, he did not retire. He joined defence industry, starting as the Canberra-based defence marketing manager for Computer Sciences of Australia (today called CSC). For the next 15 years he ran his own business as a consultant, representing a range of local and overseas companies offering equipment to the ADF, as well as advising the South Australian Government.

It was during the early 1980s that he became an Old Crow. Not an insult, but a select group of like-minded associates interested in electronic and cyber warfare. In fact, he

was one of the Australian chapters' founders. He once said that it was so secret, that even he didn't know what it was all about.

He also wrote for the defence magazine - Pacific Defence Reporter - as Weapon Systems Editor and served as an ABC TV commentator for the 1987 Sydney welcome home march for Vietnam Veterans and commentated on several Anzac Day marches after that.

As well as the media involvement, in 2022, the RAAF published his book Dreadful Lady over the Mekong Delta, his recollection of the Canberra operations in Vietnam. It now forms a valuable part of the RAAF's rich history.

For over 20 years he was a member of the Council of USI of the ACT, with five years as Secretary, before serving another five years as National Secretary of the parent body – the Royal United Services institute of Australia. He was a long-serving member of the Air Force Association and Aviation Club here in Canberra.

As you can tell, he remained active and engaged till his passing last month.

It was a privilege to have known Bob from the mid-1980s, and I know he will be missed by all present here today.

Bob Howe, rest in peace.