

Colonel Robert E Ainslie, USAF Retired

May 11, 1922 - August 5, 2007 Flying with the Angels.

Who was Bob Ainslie? A loving son, loyal brother, devoted husband, wonderful father and of course, Papa A to all his grand and great grandchildren. Not only was he a highly decorated veteran, but a pilot, patriot and leader of men. He wore many other hats- teacher of children, seeker of knowledge, a good friend, practical joker, athlete, fixer of all things mechanical, hunter, fisherman, camper, gentleman and a survivor who did not know the meaning of "can't" or "not possible". He was our hero. Country Bob was born the son of a German mother, Emma L. Nagle and a Scottish father, Wilbur Raymond Ainslie. He started his life in Mitchell, South Dakota- home of the famous Corn Palace. He had a rich childhood surrounded by loving family. His mentor was his Uncle Fred Nagle, who took him camping, hunting, and fishing and encouraged him to pursue athletics. This tradition was carried on as each of his children came along. We all have fond memories of camping all across America & Europe, learning archery, pheasant hunting in South Dakota, fishing and of course the pursuit of athletic excellence. He loved classic cars, motorcycles and the open road his entire life. He played basketball, baseball and football. He graduated with a class of 50 in 1939. He was affectionately nicknamed "Punk" by his classmates (which had an altogether different connotation in that era). He remained close with his classmates all these years. At 18 he customized and rode a Harley '45. Enter the "Dakota Kid". He wasn't content to just buy saddlebags, he built his own "box", which was transferred to subsequent cycles. He tried an Indian, which blew up on him, so he went back to Harleys ('64). His true vocation was to become a pilot. He always dreamed of flying up through the wild blue yonder. Planes were his greatest fascination. World War II exploded on both sides of the world. He was an adventurer and loved his country. He could not stay at home. He enlisted in the Army Air Corp, but since he was so young, it required a parent's permission to become a pilot. His mother was afraid and refused to give it. He went anyway and soon found himself in the South Pacific hot spot, Guadalcanal as the next best thing, an aircraft mechanic. He quickly moved through the enlisted ranks, as high as one could go. When the war ended, he got out, returned home to family, college and travel. The US Air Force came into being and no longer needing anyone's permission, off he went to Texas to become a pilot. He graduated with honors from the USAF Officer's Candidate School. He pinned on his new lieutenant bars and kicked off his long career as pilot serving his country. While at McChord AFB, 1st LT. Ainslie found himself reunited with the beautiful, blonde LuGarda Mernaugh, who was to become his soul mate and life long partner. They pledged their marriage vows in Carson City and honeymooned in the romantic city by the Bay, San Francisco. "Til death do us part "meant something to these two! At the new station, Travis AFB, we became a family of 4- Dad, Mom, son William Daniel and new daughter, JoAleen. As the family grew, duty called. The Korean Conflict reared its ugly head, so flying air evacuations in Korea became his new mission. When that ended, he moved his family back to Tacoma, and his country sent him to Kodiak, Alaska as the Air Force liaison with the US Navy. Talk about survival training! During all of this, he still found time to play his favorite sport, basketball. He was the forward on the 1951 USAF team that took the West Coast Regional Championship. Throughout our lives, he shared his knowledge and each of his kids all played on a team somewhere! The Lone Star state needed him again, so back to San Antonio we went. He became the proud father of twins, Tom & John. He painted Disney cartoon characters on their new bedroom walls (the new owners left the images and colors up for 20 years later). He believed in combining efficiency with fun, and loved to surprise us. So, with the addition of two new kids, the Hornet had to go and a new Mercury station wagon was the vehicle of choice. It just so happened, JoAleen was having her 6th birthday party on the day the car was to be picked up. The salesman was a magician on the side. Dad talked him into delivering the car and a magic performance on that day to the delight of all the kids! Year 1957 brought us back to Travis AFB.

Farm life was wonderful there. Here Missy Joye was born! Now a Captain, he would fly by over the farm house at low altitude and dip his wings on his way back to base to let us know he would be home soon. Years 1960-63, what a time that was! He went ahead to our new station, Evreux AFB in France to get us new digs. He found a wonderful old, former hotel in the sleepy village of Conch that once served as Nazi headquarters for that region during WWII. Again, he demonstrated his penchant for wheeling & dealing and secured it as our home for a song. There we lived with our own castle ruins in which to play. While we played and Mother kept the family together, France was the jumping off point for many dangerous missions, some we can talk about and some we can't. Major Ainslie was flying supplies and personnel in and out of the Belgian Congo in support of the French during the anti-colonial uprising; he dropped and picked up paratroopers in Libya; was part of the first US earth orbit Mercury shot retrieval team; flew support during the many Pakistani-Indian conflicts; flew many missions in Kenya, Egypt and Greece. He was the pilot who helped the Dali Lama escape from the Chinese by flying him out of Tibet. Those were probably the scariest three years to that point for the family. But he kept safe and always brought something back for each of us from every trip. Year 1963 brought us stateside for a 2 year stint at Sewart AFB, near Nashville, TN. Again, that was mostly a place to hang his hat. Again he was sent to other world hotspots to fly supplies in and people out. Panama Canal was a frequent destination. The next port of call was Lockbourne AFB, near Columbus, Ohio in 1965. He found another great farm on which to live. Being the go getter that he was, he was given greater responsibility which required us to move on base. The conflict in Viet Nam was beginning to dominate world news and America was drawn into the war. Son Dan graduated from the Army flight school as a Huey helicopter pilot assigned to the 1st Air Calvary Division. Dad was so proud to pin the 2nd LT bars on Dan's shoulders, despite the fact that Dad was "fixed" wing and Dan was "Rotor" wing. Both were dispatched to SE Asia-Dad to Udorn, Thailand as Lt Col & Dan to Viet Nam to fly many more perilous missions. Dan was shot down and missing in action on his second tour- Dad moved mountains to find him. Through faith and God's intervention, Dan was rescued and both managed to make it home. The continuous flow of letters and pictures kept us all close. He came back to McChord after a short stay at Norton AFB, was promoted to full colonel assigned as Chief of Maintenance of the 62nd Tactical Air Command. In 1973 he was placed on the list to receive a star as Brigadier General. If he accepted, it would mean an unaccompanied tour at another hot spot on the other side of the world. After much thought, he decided 33 years serving his country was enough. He would rather stay home and get to know his family better. He retired and spent the next 20 years working in the private sector in various businesses: Contract Manager at the Goodwill; Service & Repair Manager at Carsten's Porsche Audi, and other places. He soon got itchy feet. Since Mom wouldn't let him buy a plane, he bought an RV from the dealership at which he was working as their service manager. This began a long tradition of traveling across the USA every summer and hunting every fall with Mom, kids and grandkids. He also found time to complete radio, TV and technology courses at Bates Technical College. He was the first to buy a home PC when they became available to the general public. He was proud of his children- he pinned officer's bars on brother Tom when he joined the Marines and sister Joye when she joined the Air Force. He worried, but didn't let it show when Tom was on call for Desert Shield and Joye was assigned to the Strategic Air Command. He fully supported brother Dan when he was assigned as the head of Terrorist Activity investigations for the NW and brother John & sister JoAleen as they pursued careers in education. He always stressed family, God and country. He insisted we live in the communities and learn the cultures of all the places to which we found ourselves sent. He encouraged us to do our best whether it be sports, school, work or love. No goals were insurmountable if we really wanted to succeed. He talked us through the hard times and celebrated the good times. He made us understand that our word and our integrity is all we really have in this world- take care to always keep it honest and in good repute. He had an awesome sense of humor- just ask any of the kids or grandkids who went camping with beloved Papa A about "barking spiders". Or the

traveling bone with the sons, sons-in-law and grandsons who had the honor of hunting with him. He was a loving, romantic husband who never failed to send a dozen yellow roses to Mother on every one of the Texas born twins' birthdays. He was a doting father to his girls. We each have him to thank for our insatiable desire for new and original shoes- he always provided us with a new pair every Christmas, Easter, birthday and just because. He was the ultimate Dad to the boys when it came to guns, fishing gear and golf. He was a great teacher of how to cope with the hard lessons life throws at us and the best example any kid could ever have. He was stubborn and a fighter who refused to give up all the way to the very end. Do not grieve his passing- rather be joyful that he is finally free from a body that could no longer meet the demand of his mind and spirit. He went peacefully after talking to each of the kids and grandkids, while holding the hand of his baby daughter, Joye. He is with Mother now off dancing somewhere to "I left My Heart in San Francisco" and looking down on all of us with loving pride. He was preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, LuGarda; his brother Wilber Ainslie; his mother Emma Nagle Ainslie; his father Wilber Raymond Ainslie; and granddaughter Heidi Ainslie. He is survived by his son, William Daniel Ainslie (wife Sherry, 3 children and 6 grandchildren); daughter JoAleen L Ainslie (2 children and 4 grandchildren); the twin sons Thomas Richard Ainslie (wife Rhonda, 4 children and 1 grandchild); John Robert Ainslie (wife Brenda, 4 children); daughter Letha Joye Ainslie (husband Rob, 2 children). The family would like to thank all the friends and caring folks at Patriots Landing who helped him overcome the void following Mother's passing in 2005. They were like family and made him happy. Our deep appreciation also goes to the wonderfully compassionate care givers and doctors at Park Rose, Tacoma General Hospital and Allenmore ICU who eased him through the last weeks of his life. The Rosary will be at 7 PM, Sunday, August 12th at Gaffney Funeral Home Chapel, 1002 S Yakima Ave, Tacoma. The funeral Mass will be celebrated at St. Patrick's Church, 1001 North J St, Tacoma, WA on Monday at 11 AM, reception to follow in the Parish Hall.

Interment with full military honors will be held at the Tahoma National Cemetery on Monday, August 20th at 10 AM. Please leave online condolences at [www.gaffneyfuneralhome.com](http://www.gaffneyfuneralhome.com)  
Arrangements by Gaffney Funeral Home 253-572-6003.