

LTC Robert Edward Taft

Robert Edward Taft age 66, passed away peacefully and unexpectedly in his home in Denton, TX on Feb. 25, 2017. He was born in Valley Forge PA on Sept. 03, 1950, to Franklin and Shirley Taft currently of Virginia Beach, VA.

Bob graduated from Kellam High School in Virginia Beach, VA. He began setting numerous track records there that stood for decades. He continued his education at the United States Air Force Academy receiving degrees in History and Soviet Area studies while continuing to set many track and field records that also stood for decades. He graduated in 1973.

Bob married Lara Edmondston on December 23, 1973. Shortly after he finished pilot training in Enid OK, they traveled to their first assignment in Okinawa Japan, where he flew Combat Talon Blackbirds throughout the Pacific Theater. Their first child, Jennifer, was born there in 1976, as the United States celebrated its 200th Birthday. He was a very happy man and even though she was a little firecracker, daddy nicknamed her “Boogie”. Just a few short months later he found that he was again to be father. Life was great, and his young family of three traveled back to the United States all the way to Florida for their second assignment. Two months later, a very healthy boy was born. But once more, the couple was tasked with nicknaming this little Robert Jr. Bob suggested “Beau” no X, and Lara said no “Bo”, so BEAU it was. The family was complete.

Bob was selected for several special schools throughout his military career; however, the Air Force Institute of Technology was by far the most difficult. After 96 grueling hours he completed a master's degree while also earning the designation of “Distinguished Graduate”- the military equivalent of Summa Cum Laude. Those 96 academic hours were accomplished in only 18 months.

His military honors and accomplishments are far too many to list, but his favorite was becoming an “Honorary Frogman” by the Navy Special Warfare Command.

Bob's primary “War” was the “War on Drugs”. He flew many missions into the jungle of South America, assisting this effort.

Then the call for what was to be his final military assignment, Lieutenant Colonel Taft closed his 26-year career by serving for seven years in the Pentagon. While there he made their home in Maryland where they soon found a wonderful church family in Gaithersburg, Md. Bob and Lara eventually became youth pastors at Grace United Methodist Church, which were incredibly happy days. Upon retirement they returned to Texas where he taught for a few years. He then decided to enter Nursing School with his daughter Jennifer. Bob had always had a heart for missions. His long affiliation with “Youth With A Mission” led to the step toward the medical side, Mercy Works.

Bob and Lara became Mercy Reservists willing to deploy locally and abroad where any humanitarian need arose. He participated in local assignments near YWAM Base in the Tyler Texas area, and also delivered Medical Relief supplies and assisted with clean up after Hurricane Katrina, as well as serving as “Crisis Counselor” at Ground Zero after 9/11/01.

He willingly helped Lara care for her invalid mother in their home after her father's passing. He was indispensable for nine months, while still working at the Denton Regional Medical Center, which was very precious to him. There were many occasions that Lara pleaded for him to seek service closer to their ranch in Leonard TX, but his reply was always, ‘I love the people I work with’.

It is hard to choose a single area of greatest impact, beyond his immediate biological family. However, his family believes he would hope it was for his foster children. During his last 10 years of military service, he was also a foster father. He believed that all children were worthy of love, respect, and safety, and he gave that freely. Helping others in life, and learning, was his tribute to his savior, Jesus Christ, who has welcomed him into his arms.

We, who love you will miss you terribly. We will see you again praise be to God.