

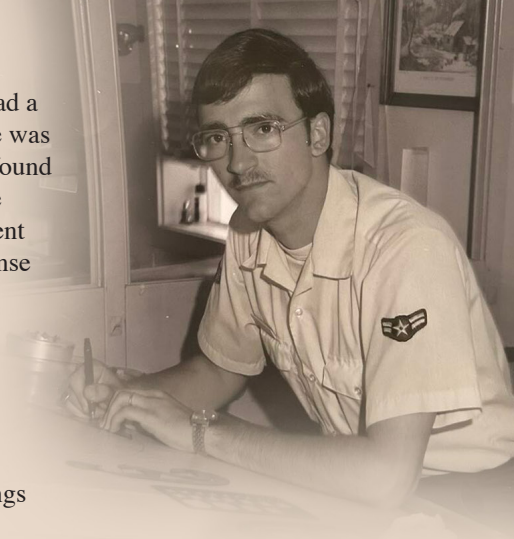
CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LOVE OF

*Robert E. Balsley Jr*

November 27, 1954 - December 12, 2024

Robert E. Balsley, Jr was a quiet man, reserved and disciplined, but he had a funny, creative side that he shared with his closest friends and family. He was a good man who loved his family dearly, served his country with pride, found a vocation where he could make valuable contributions, and changed life for the better for many who knew him. With a towering stature and reticent personality this gentle giant was honest and honorable, with a distinct sense of right and wrong. He will be sorely missed and forever loved.

Robert was born November 27, 1954, to Carol Leuenhagen and Robert E. Balsley. However, during the first year of Rob's life, Robert Sr was in the US Air Force and stationed away from home. During that year, Rob Jr and his mother lived in an apartment in Sioux City, IA, waiting for Robert Sr to come home. While in Sioux City, their family grew as siblings Teresa and Denise were born. Following Robert Sr's military service, the family moved to Ohio, settling in Fayetteville. The family grew even more as Rob's sister Cathy joined the family. After a few years in Fayetteville, the family made Price Hill, a suburb of Cincinnati, OH, their home. It is in Price Hill that Rob's brother Mark was born.



Carol and Robert Sr were devout Catholics and passed their faith on to their children. Rob Jr attended St. Lawrence Catholic Elementary School and Elder High School. While in high school, he worked part-time jobs at Delhi Chili and the Mercantile Library in downtown Cincinnati. He enjoyed going to sports events and the usual high school activities. He did make one wrong decision when he decided to drive his dad's rental car after being told pointedly not to drive it. Unfortunately, the car ended up teetering on top of a low brick wall that surrounded their yard. It's a story that lives on in the family archives. Rob was proud to have graduated from Elder in 1973 and remained a faithful football fan throughout his life. His favorite color was Elder High School purple.



Immediately following graduation, Rob joined the US Air Force and was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK. A co-worker of Rob's, told Rob about her sister, Rhonda. Rob then made an investigative trek to the local mall to try and catch a glimpse of Rhonda. He tried to inconspicuously check her out by walking quickly across the store front Rhonda was working in, but his height made him quite conspicuous. Rob called Rhonda the next day to ask her on a date. While they were dating he began to visit Rhonda at the mall during her breaks. They shared many hot fudge sundaes at the sidewalk café in the mall before their wedding in 1976 at the Base Chapel on Tinker AFB. Soon daughters Kelly and Kimberley were born, and Rob was proud to be their father. Sadly, their son, William August died at birth in 1994.



When Rob finished his 6 years of military service, he transitioned to a Civil Service job as an Engineering Technician with the Department of Defense and remained at Tinker Air Force Base. Rhonda also found employment on the base as an engineering technician, as well as, working in civil engineering for Tinker AFB. Rob was a supervisor in drafting and engineering of communication schematics for Air Force military installations worldwide. He was also a lead engineering technician in





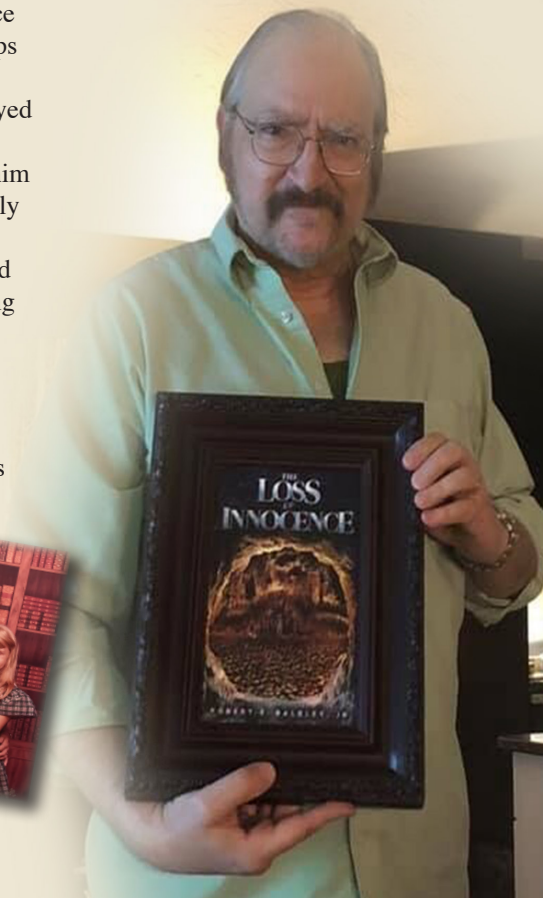
ensuring schematics for aircraft parts were correct prior to contractors initiation of producing the part. Rob served 42 years with the Department of Defense before his retirement in 2014. Not only did he make valuable contributions to national defense, but he also became the mentor for young airmen. It is to his credit that so many young men attribute their success to “Mr. B’s” guidance and his being their role model.

Rob led an orderly, disciplined life and stuck to a fairly regular schedule that included polishing his cowboy boots once a week, mowing the grass every Saturday morning, and exercising regularly. Rob and Rhonda nurtured their children’s interests, while instilling in them a strong work ethic that included regular chores. He was an honest person who gave constructive criticism when he felt it appropriate, but his daughters say it was always given from a spirit of helping them improve, never from a spirit of belittling. The family supported Kelly by traveling to her softball games for many years and were fans for Kimberley as she learned piano and played flute in the junior high school band. The family traveled to Cincinnati each year to visit Rob’s parents. He was very close to his parents, and Rhonda said they were both close to each other’s parents. They shared similar values, as they had been reared by parents with similar values. When Robert Sr died in 2017, Rob and Rhonda and family made the decision to move back to NKY to be close to his mother and family.

Rob liked to travel and liked to drive, but he was destination bound once they hit the road, and he didn’t like to stop for unexpected shopping trips or detours to see unscheduled sites. But he did it to please his wife and daughters. Rob liked to visit Civil War Memorials, and the family enjoyed visits to places like Shiloh and Lookout Mountain. The girls have fond memories of tricking Rob into going across a rope bridge and leading him on a circuitous hike. More recently, Rob enjoyed spending time at family get-togethers with his sons-in-law, Danny Sr and Andrew. They would sit together in the living room “shooting the breeze” over various shared topics of interest. They all also enjoyed a guy’s day get together bonding and eating good food.

In the 1980’s, Rob began to play Dungeons and Dragons with a few friends a couple of times a month, and they continued to play until the autumn of 2024. While Rob lived in OK, they gathered at one another’s houses, but they continued to play via internet after Rob moved to NKY in 2017.

There was a playful side to Rob that the family enjoyed, including his cowboy shuffle, but Rob came to life in a whole new way when he played D&D. He became very animated, making his characters come to life in





imaginative, spirited ways. The girls loved to watch his transformation into an exuberant player, with games sometimes lasting eight hours. He was a creative Dungeon Master, designing campaigns that were detailed and descriptive. He was a gifted storyteller and writer.



Eventually, Rob wanted to expand his campaign writing to include the actions of other people's characters, so he wrote them into books. Rob's retirement project became writing three books, Salvation of Innocence, Struggle for Innocence, & Loss of Innocence, creating a series called A Bridge of Magic. He was featured on the cover of "Trientrepreneur Magazine" in September of 2021.



Rob dearly loved his grandchildren: Hannah, Danny Jr, August, Robert, and Brookelynn. He was an important male role-model in Hannah's life and she was a "Papa's girl". When she was learning to crawl, Papa was right there with her on the floor, showing her how. The significance of this relationship was noted by Carson, Hannah's fiancé, who asked for Papa's blessing, in addition to her father's, before proposing. Papa bonded with Danny Jr over their enjoyment of Godzilla movies. August and Robert bonded with their Papa over loving dogs and telling stories. Brooke, still so young, was growing in her love for Papa and needed group hugs with him.



And speaking of dogs, Rob loved his dogs and spoiled them. He was very concerned about their well-being even when he was in the hospital. Cassie and Mercedes were good friends and well loved. Rob enjoyed watching sports on TV, but avoided watching his favorite teams, the Reds, the Bengals, Elder High School football, and University of Oklahoma football, as he found it too stressful. He liked Rhonda's baked beans on holidays and his mom's stroganoff. He liked keeping order and being wildly creative. He wrote from the heart as well as from his imagination.



Rob worked hard to maintain a healthy body despite several setbacks. He ate healthy foods and exercised every day. He fought hard against every adversity and leaned on his faith in the hard times. Rob died on December 12, 2024. He is gone too soon, but the stories of his courage and tenacity, his strength and compassionate guidance, and his great love for his family and friends will keep his memory alive.

