



After graduating from Liberty, Bob received his BS degree in psychology with a pre-med minor from Moravian College and his MA in psychology from Temple University in Philadelphia. Because Philly is close to Bethlehem Bob obtained rides home on weekends to spend time with his then fiancé, Carolsue (Sue) Sobota. Sue graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1962 and was employed by the aviation division of Bethlehem Steel Corporation. After completing his Master's degree in the summer of 1966 and after five years of dating, Bob and Sue married.

Following Temple, Bob planned to attend the University of Oklahoma to earn his Ph.D. in psychology. However, with the country involved in the escalating Vietnam War and fearing the draft so soon after his marriage, he decided to join the United States Navy. The Navy's ad campaign at the time was enticing with, "fly your own jet" and Bob thought, "that's for me", so in October 1966 he headed to the Aviation Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Pensacola, FL, was Commissioned as an Ensign in February of '67 and began primary flight training in a T-34B Mentor, a propeller driven aircraft. This was followed by basic jet training in a T-2A *Buckeye* (single engine). He also received aircraft carrier qualification in the T-2B *Buckeye* (twin engine).

Bob and Sue relocated to Kingsville, TX in January of 1968 where he began advanced jet training in the TF-9J *Cougar*. A month later, his life nearly ended. During his 3rd flight in the Cougar, following a touch and go landing, he climbed to 400 feet and the jet had a "flame-out"; a sudden failure of the plane's engine. Although Bob ejected, his falling trajectory landed him in the burning fuel. Instant realization of being on fire and finding he had a double compound fracture (tibia and fibula) of his left leg, he crawled out of the inferno. Bob was admitted to the Corpus Christi Naval Hospital where he spent the next five weeks in intensive care for burns and infections. His biggest fear was that he might lose his leg which did not happen. One day, while lying in his hospital bed Bob heard a Navy jet fly overhead and knew he would have to fly again. Following 11 months of healing and recovery, Bob returned to flight training and in April 1969 earned his "Wings" as a Naval Aviator.

Serious combat training began in Jacksonville, FL where new aviators learned to use aircraft as a weapon system; dropping live bombs, firing live ammunition, conducting night landings on carriers, etc. Upon completion, Bob and his family (now with a daughter) drove cross country to Lemoore, CA for fleet duty and assignment to a squadron flying A-4 *Skyhawks*. The squadron embarked in the aircraft carrier USS Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31) and deployed to Vietnam where he flew 83 successful combat missions and although enduring a lot of anti-aircraft fire, was never hit.

The "Bonnie Dick", as the aircraft carrier was called, was decommissioned after that deployment and Bob received orders to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN as a Naval ROTC instructor. It appeared to be a perfect transition, teaching at the college level and enabling him to pursue that Ph.D. Although the idea seemed great, several voids quickly appeared in his life; working alongside the sailors, the comradely and team spirit that the military infused in him, and of course, flying. Bob realized that he was far better suited to teach something practical such as aviation opposed to academics. Prior to returning to fleet duty, Sue and Bob agreed that their future would be career Navy as long as he was having fun! We are all familiar with the slogan... "Join the Navy and see the World", and that's exactly what Bob did.



Bob spent months and years living on aircraft carriers – the naval aviators "home". As Bob was promoted in rank and assumed increased responsibilities, he flew from the decks of various aircraft carriers. He commanded Attack Squadron 65 embarked on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and was the Commander, Carrier Air Wing THREE (CAG) embarked on the USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67). As Commander of the Air Wing, Bob was checked out to fly every type of aircraft in the eight squadrons under his command – it was like being "a kid in a candy store", flying 6 different aircraft. He then

commanded the Medium Attack Wing ONE in Virginia Beach, VA – home to all the Navy A-6 Intruder Squadrons on the east coast.

In 1989, Bob joined the world of the surface warriors. Selected to command the USS Niagara Falls (AFS-3), a supply ship home-ported in Guam, Marianas Islands, the family made another move half way across the Pacific Ocean. He sailed the ship all over the western Pacific and learned “the buck stops with the Captain”. The most appealing part of his job was leading and working with the sailors that made this ship function. He also had the opportunity to incorporate women into a formerly all-male crew and took the ship into the Persian Gulf for Desert Storm – when the U.S. invaded Iraq to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. The USS Niagara Falls was commissioned into the Navy in 1967 and deactivated in 2008. She served the Navy for 41 proud years. Finally, in 2010 the empty ship served as a target in a naval exercise and sunk off the coast of Kauai, one of the Hawaiian Islands. She continues her “service” as an artificial reef.

Ordered in 1991 to the Naval War College in Newport, RI, Bob earned a second master's degree in Strategic Studies, after which he took command of Logistics Squadron TWO in Leonardo, NJ in charge of ten ships; 5 in Leonardo, 3 in Norfolk and 2 in Charleston. To complete his naval career, Bob served as the Defense and Naval Attaché to New Zealand for 2½ years. He and his wife lived in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, where he worked directly under the U. S. Ambassador in the U.S. Embassy.



In 1997, after 30 years of service Bob retired from the Navy as a Captain (equivalent to Colonel). The Houser family moved to Washington, DC where he found a job with SRA International; an Information Technology company located in Arlington, VA. Here he implemented Business Process Engineering (BPR) for the Marine Corps Headquarters and several Navy Commands. Four and a half years later Bob hired on with The Boeing Company, serving in Washington, DC and later in San Diego, CA marketing Boeing-made defense weapons systems (aircraft, missiles, weapons kits, etc.). Finally, in 2009, Bob officially retired. He and Sue settled in Ocean Isle Beach, NC, located half way between Wilmington, NC and Myrtle Beach, SC. They live on a golf course where they both enjoy chasing the little ball, along with the sun and fun. Both are volunteers in their church and help mentoring and tutoring public school children. Bob served as President of the local “newcomers” club for 2 years and served on the community Homeowners Association Board of Directors. For

relaxation, Bob has a woodshop where he enjoys making “sawdust”. Both enjoy traveling - mostly to visit their grandchildren and great grandchild.

Bob and Sue have four children. Their eldest, Melissa, age 49, is a graduate of William and Mary College. She and her husband live in Alaska. Bobby, Jr, age 47, lives on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii, and is a Captain for Hawaiian Airlines, flying a A-330 “wide body” jet all over the Pacific. Their third child, Krista, age 45, lives in northern Virginia. A graduate of Mary Washington University, she teaches high school math. Last but not least, their youngest child, Steven, age 43, lives in North Carolina. A Virginia Tech graduate, he is employed as an architect.

The Housers have been blessed with good health and a most rewarding life. With four children, eight grandchildren, and one great grandson, they are witnessing the beginning of another generation. They have seen much of the world, moved 20 times, made dear friends, both in the navy and civilian life, and continue to enjoy retirement.