



Robert John De Fauw

November 1, 1934 - May 23, 2026

Robert J. De Fauw was born on November 1, 1934 in Detroit, Michigan, to William and Bertha De Fauw. He graduated from the University of Detroit in 1957. That same year, he joined the U.S. Marines, where he served as a weapons instructor, demolition instructor, and platoon sergeant during the Korean War in Force Recon and in the reserves. He served as a Detroit police officer in vice and rackets squad From 1961 to 1962. He was a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in Detroit from 1962 thru 1966 and then as a Special Agent in Chicago. For the next 2 years, he was Special Agent in Charge in Marseille, France, overseeing foreign operations across Europe, the Middle East, the Near East, and Africa, headquartered in Rome. During the height of the infamous “French Connection” era, he led overt and covert operations to stop heroin trafficking centered in Marseille.

In 1969, he married Danielle De Fauw in Marseille and became Deputy Regional Director. Later that year, based in Seattle, Washington, he oversaw offices in six cities and four states, as well as Vancouver, British Columbia, directing personnel and resources to enforce federal narcotics laws. He also worked closely with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police throughout British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta up until 1971. That same year, he moved to San Francisco, where he directed operations in Fresno and San Jose, California and Reno, Nevada, supervising 22 agents until 1976. During that time, he earned a B.S. in Administration of Justice from Golden Gate University in California. From 1976 to 1978, he was responsible for all

operations in 20 countries, including Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. 1978 to 1981, he served as Regional Director of the Drug Enforcement Administration DEA in Bangkok, Thailand, overseeing the Orient and Southeast Asia, fighting and neutralizing opium warlords in the Golden Triangle to stop the flow of heroin into the United States. From 1983 to 1987, he was based in Detroit, Michigan, where he targeted cocaine trafficking across the Canadian border into the United States. He initiated and coordinated the writing of the State of Michigan Financial Forfeiture Act and created the first program in the United States to combat crack cocaine. He retired from the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1987. His numerous accomplishments and recognitions can be viewed at The DEA Museum in Arlington Va. He became Drug Program coordinator for the NFL based out of Detroit Michigan and worked at the Wayne County Prosecutors office dealing in organized crime, major narcotic organizations and gangs working with Federal, state, county and local law enforcement in the US and Canada before finally retiring.

Robert J. Defauw served a distinguished military career and dedicated his life to law and drug enforcement around the world. He passed away peacefully at home in Brighton, Michigan, on May 23, 2026. He is the Father to five children, Grandfather to four and Godfather to one.

Visitation will be Friday May 29th from 1 PM to 8 PM, with a rosary service at 7 PM, at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 Ann Arbor Road West (between Sheldon and Beck) Plymouth.

Funeral Service Saturday May 30th at 10 AM at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 Ann Arbor Road West (between Sheldon and Beck) Plymouth. Interment at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Detroit, MI.

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Cemetery Details

Mt. Olivet Cemetery

17100 Van Dyke
Detroit, MI 48234

Upcoming Events

Visitation

MAY 29. 1:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

Rosary Service

MAY 29. 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

Funeral Service

MAY 30. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth
46401 Ann Arbor Road West
Plymouth, MI 48170
(734) 459-2250
plymouth@vermeulenh.com