



Remembrance

Vietnam Faces of the Fallen

Princeton Class of 1966



Remembering Ed Keeble by Jake Cartwright '66

Ed (aka Keeble-Ed) was one of my roommates from freshman year at 3 N. Dod with Mike Tooke and John Bowman through senior year with the Patton Palace conglomerate.

Early October of 1966 found Ed and I driving to Quantico, VA to begin Marine Corps Officer Candidate School. We were assigned to the same platoon and for the next three months encouraged, commiserated and helped each other to graduate and be commissioned 2/LTs in the USMC.

We had both qualified while at Princeton for Naval Aviation Flight School at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, FL. So naturally we were roommates at the BOQ (Bachelor Officer Quarters) when we began flight school in January 1967.

Ed wasn't in the BOQ for long as he proposed to Alice Collins (Happy) and a wedding was planned for March 4, 1967. I was Ed's best man with Walt Stockman, John Bowman and a host of other Patton Palace members serving as ushers. Of course, Ed, Walt, Bows and I all wore our new Marine dress blue uniforms.

Back at Pensacola we went through basic ground school, then on to the T-34B, a piston engine trainer, for initial flight training. All the Marines were in the same squadron so once again we were joined at the hip. After initial training, selections were made for continuing training in either jets or helicopters.

We finally parted, with Ed going to helicopters and staying in the Pensacola area, while I chose jets and went to NAS Meridian, MS. By January 1968, I was back in Pensacola for gunnery training and carrier qualifications. For three months Ed, Happy and I were together frequently along with Bows, Walt, Dave Van Horne and Sandy Larsen, all of us in some phase of flight training. At the end of February, I left NAS Pensacola for advanced training at NAS Chase Field in Texas, and that was the last time I saw Keeble-Ed.

Since the Marines were losing helicopters in Vietnam at a far greater rate than jets, the helicopter pilots were pushed through flight school with urgency. I knew Ed had chosen to fly the Huey (UH-1E) and was at Marine Corps Air Station New River, NC for further training before he would head to Vietnam, and I later learned that he was in Vietnam by the late summer of 1968.



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Continued: Remembering Ed Keeble by Jake Cartwright '66

Any Marine pilot flying a helicopter in Vietnam had a very dangerous job, and the Huey was particularly vulnerable. Ed was with VMO-6, based at Quang Tri, while I was still at MCAS El Toro, CA, flying the RF-4B Phantom.

Our squadron was on a two-week deployment to MCAS Yuma when I received a call from my wife. Happy had called her with the terrible news that Ed had been killed. His Huey had been shot down on February 28, 1969, during a battle in the A Shau Valley, a key infiltration route along the Ho Chi Minh trail and heavily fortified with anti-aircraft guns. All aboard were killed.

A Marine escort accompanies a Marine killed in combat to his final resting place, and I asked Happy if she would like me to accompany Ed. She said yes, and I asked for and received orders to travel to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware.

At Dover, Ed's casket was placed in a hearse, and together we traveled to Arlington National Cemetery. A service was held at the church and while I don't remember the service, I do remember walking out behind Ed's casket with Happy on my arm, while the flag draped casket passed through two lines of Marines, in their dress blue uniforms, saluting Ed.

At the burial site there was the traditional rifle salute, the folding of the flag and its presentation to Happy. As the casket was about to be lowered, Happy stood up and laid one red rose on the casket, in memory of the one red rose Ed had given her on their first date.

Ed Keeble was a wonderful friend and a great man. He was a very proud Marine who served in a dangerous time flying dangerous missions. All of us who knew him well still remember him with clarity and mourn his loss.