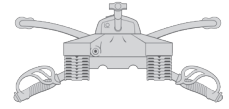




LTC Ralph B. Garretson Jr. USA, Retired

October 4, 1987 | Died in Midland, TX



Ralph Bonner Garretson Jr. was born in El Paso, TX on December 6, 1939. His dad, Ralph Sr., was a career Army officer who served in both World War II and Korea before retiring as a colonel. As a Transportation Corps officer, Ralph Sr. managed the Army's port business and earned two Legion of Merit citations for his performance in Guam and Korea. In addition, Queen Elizabeth II recognized him as an honorary commander of the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire.

Ralph Jr. came to West Point planning for a career in the service. A ready smile, a quick wit, and an easy-going attitude made him a great friend. He could tell the most outrageous stories with a straight face and kept everyone laughing. He kept the upperclassmen laughing so hard that they forgot to harass the other plebes—like the time he slurped down a whole glass of buttermilk (as ordered by a firstie), smacked his lips, and thanked him, as if he *liked* the stuff. He actually hated it, but it was worth it to see the firstie regretting that extra “treat!”

Love of the Army and the ability to get the job done were Ralph's hallmarks. He was very intelligent and stood in the top half of his West Point Class of 1961. He was always ready to help others with their studies. His participation in cadet clubs, especially the Math Forum, would help him later in his career.

In his senior year Ralph elected to join the Armor branch. After he graduated, his assignment to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany was not without excitement. On November 22 1963, Ralph happened to be moving his tanks overland on an exercise when word reached Germany that President Kennedy had been assassinated that day. The roar of U.S. tanks across terrain rattled both sides of the German border, intimidating both friend and foe before they realized that it was only a military exercise.

Upon his return to the States, Ralph married Britannia “Tanny” Wilhoyt in Alexandria, VA on May 31, 1965. Assignments followed in the States and Korea before he departed for Vietnam in 1967. He joined the 3rd Squadron, 5th U.S. Cavalry Regiment (“Black Knights”). Ralph served with the Black Knights during the Tet Offensive of 1968, commanding Troop A and later serving as squadron operations officer. On January 30, 1968, Ralph led his unit, and while clearing Viet Cong elements from fortified positions in the town of Dong Lack he “continually exposed himself to enemy fire...evacuated wounded, and towed one disabled tank to a position where it could assist in the attack. This effort enabled the friendly forces to destroy a major portion of an enemy battalion.” He was awarded the Silver Star for his valor while fighting that day. He was also awarded the Bronze Star and Air Medal before he returned to the U.S. in 1968.



Ralph returned to West Point. He taught cadets and earned his master's degree on his own time. One memorable escapade occurred while he was teaching at West Point in 1972. Just before the Army-Navy football game in Philadelphia, a bunch of cadets stole the Navy goat and were looking for some way to transport it to Philly. One of the instructors said: “I had an old truck which I bought from the Army Athletic Association, and someone asked me to cart the goat to Philly. The truck was a wreck—I didn't think it would make it, so ultimately Ralph took the goat to Philly in the family RV, and the cadets paraded it around at the game.” Ralph's children, Ralph

III and Ellis, recall their mother locking that darn goat in the latrine—and he did what any old goat locked in a toilet would do...created an epic movement!

Following his assignment at West Point, Ralph was selected to attend the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He graduated a year later and left with his family for Germany, where he served in the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment from 1974 to 1978.

Following duty in Germany, the family returned to the U.S. and to an assignment at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. During this time, Ralph and Tanny ended their marriage. This was to be Ralph's final tour of duty in the U.S. Army. He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1984, as chief of the Resource Analysis Branch, USA TRASANA. He remained in Las Cruces, NM and later married Diana (“Punkie”) Edwards, an elected county commissioner in Doña Ana County. He opened a computer shop and soon applied his computer skills to consulting in artificial intelligence.

His sister would later recall that, in addition to honoring the lifetime of service he devoted to our country, we, the family, remember him as a smart, hard-working, and caring person, at the same time we deeply miss him and the joy he infused into any gathering.

Ralph died at age 47 on October 4, 1987, killed by a drunk driver near Midland, TX. A retired officer still in his prime, he was enroute to Arkansas to start work on a government contract for the U.S. Army. Ralph was survived by his mother, Dorothy Tatum Garretson; his second wife, Punkie Garretson; five stepchildren: Steven, David, Mary Kay, Croft and Chrissie Edwards; his first wife, Tanny Garretson; and their children, Dr. Ralph B. Garretson III and Ellis Garretson Cain; his sister, Ann Garretson Marshall; and his brother, James Garretson.

Ralph is buried in the Fort Bayard National Cemetery, near Silver City, NM.

— Ann Garretson Marshall, Mike Eggleston, and classmates

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