



The Gerry Capelle Award

Presented to the Cadet Candidate Company that Wins the Annual Military Academy Preparatory School Intramural Competition

by Hugh H. Trumbull and William E. "Bill" Serchak

Gerry C. Capelle is memorialized in the annual award of a trophy in his name at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School. Here is a brief summary of the tribute to Gerry on the plaque that is presented to the winning company:



Following specialized training in Air-Ground Coordination procedures, Captain Gerry Capelle was assigned to the Military Assistance Command, Republic of Vietnam as an advisor to the Vietnamese Army. During a field operation on 1 April 1965, Captain Capelle was killed while fulfilling his advisory role. For his courageous actions in RVN, he was awarded the Silver Star for heroism, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and the Purple Heart. The USMA Superintendent, Major General Lampert, presented the awards to his widow, Arlene, and to his son, Jeff.

In early 1972 the Prep School, then at Fort Belvoir, was looking for ways to reward Cadet Candidates for outstanding performance including intramural athletics. Chuck Densford, then Assistant Commandant of USMAPS, suggested that an award for the Candidate Company winning the yearlong intramural competition be named after Gerry Capelle (USMAPS 1953-54 at Stewart Field). The idea was adopted by the school staff, and Gerry's 1958 classmates in the area agreed to support the trophy's creation and annual engraving out of Class funds.

At the first presentation at the end of the 1971-72 USMAPS school year were Jack Bradshaw and Tony Smith, along with Gerry's K-1 company mates Tom Sands, Brad Johnson and two of his former roommates, Hugh Trumbull and Bill Serchak. The Capelle Trophy was then presented to the first winning company in the Commandant's office. When the "Poop School" moved on to Fort Monmouth, the annual Awards Ceremony was incorporated into a parade as part of the school's graduation ceremonies. The Class of '58 has continued to support the award by usually providing a "presenter" as well as funding the engraving of the trophy with the name of the winning company each year. The Class also provides a Pizza Party for the winning company. "The Capelle" as the Cadet Candidates call it, is a coveted goal for the cadet candidate companies during the year, while the pizza party adds an extra fillip for the winning company that sets the "soon-to-be-cadets" a little apart as they enjoy their win!

Over the years, there have been a number of trophy presenters, including Jim Davis and Mel Drisko as Commandants of USMAPS, and Bill Giallourakis when the school moved to Fort Monmouth. More recently, Bill Serchak and Hugh Trumbull have presented the award on behalf of the Class.

As the years passed, engraving spaces on the original Capelle Trophy were used up. The '58 sponsors, working with the staff and Athletic Director at the Prep School developed a new trophy to continue the award. The new trophy is designed more as a plaque than the classic trophy so that the winning company can hang it on their Company Game Room wall—showing not only the year's winner, but also the complete history of the trophy.

At the time of this writing, final plans are in place to move USMAPS back to West Point. In any case, at the 2005 presentation of the Capelle Memorial Award the USMAPS Commandant stated: "The Prep School hopes to have the continued interest and support of the Class of 1958."



Jerry with many future classmates at the USMAPS, 1954. First Row (L to R) — Wehr, Wright, Ruud, Bass, Ware, Wensinger, Harding, Roller. Second Row — Dimauro, Nowak, Capelle, McCue, Baugh, Crow, Early, Puff. Third Row — Pearsall, Hayward, Oson, Brzozowski, Walter, Luck, Hettinger, Kelly. Fourth Row — Fernandez, Sharpe, Brunner, Bailey, Raymond, Pantzer, Woodyard, Cook



Hugh Trumbull presents the Jerry Cappelle Award in 2007



Bill Serchak and Gerry's sister Joan Capelle Vandercastle present the Gerry Cappelle Award

