

Memorial Service for LTC Jeff White on Saturday, April 25

Contributed by Jerome Malczewski
Monday, 20 April 2009
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My Friends,

There will be a Memorial Service for LTC Jeff White on Saturday, April 25 at 1900hrs. The service will take place at People's Baptist Church, 3526 Spotswood Trail, Penn Laird, VA 22846 (near Harrisonburg). The web site for People's Baptist Church is as follows:

<http://www.peoplesbaptistonline.com> The phone number is 540-434-6554.

Linda and I had the opportunity and privilege to attend Jeff's Homecoming in Tullahoma, TN on March 7. As you can imagine, it was difficult saying good-bye to such a good friend. Not only because Jeff was one of our best and bravest and left behind a wife and three young children, but also because Jeff owed me 20 bucks and I'll certainly never see that money again! That joke was for you, Jeff. I know you would want your friends to have a smile on their faces when thinking of you. As one of Jeff's eulogists said at Jeff's Homecoming, "Jeff loved to make people laugh, even if it was at his own expense."

Linda and I traveled from Cape Girardeau, MO to Tullahoma for Jeff's visitation on March 6 and then accepted the gracious hospitality of Chris Smith and his wife Monica Gorbandt, '82, who treated us to a wonderful dinner and a comfortable bed at their beautiful home in Madison, AL. It was great seeing Chris again, despite the sad circumstances. We drank a toast to Jeff and warned St. Peter not to ask Jeff if he had any questions before allowing him to cross the pearly gates and enter the Kingdom of Heaven (joke #2).

On Saturday morning Chris, Linda, and I drove from Madison back to Tullahoma to say good-bye to Jeff. Jeff's wife Jocelyn was the first speaker at Jeff's eulogy and she was a tower of strength and faith. Jocelyn said that 16 years with Jeff was far from being enough time, but that she would treat this latest separation as just another deployment, albeit a much longer one than usual. Jocelyn's tribute to Jeff was inspiring and it quickly became clear that Jeff, even taking into consideration his countless virtues, is way over-married as Jocelyn's husband (I thought you would like hearing that, too, Jeff!).

Jeff's three brothers, other friends, and clergy followed Jocelyn and then we made the drive from Tullahoma to Lynchburg, where Jeff was laid to rest with full military honors. Jeff's procession was escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders, a group of patriotic Americans (most of them on motorcycle) who attend the funeral services of fallen American heroes as invited guests of the deceased's family. As a cavalryman I can attest to the splendid manner in which the PGR conduct point and rear guard operations during a funeral procession. The Patriot Guard Riders have two objectives while escorting our fallen heroes: to show their sincere respect for the fallen and their families, and to shield the mourning family and their friends from interruptions created by protesters. The PGR are great Americans and true patriots. Their web site is <http://www.patriotguard.org> if you would like to know more about them and the work they do honoring our comrades-in-arms.

Jeff's wife and children have moved back to Harrisonburg, VA from their last duty station at Ft. Hood. I know that Jocelyn would be touched by and grateful for the presence of any class members at Jeff's memorial service on April 25. Regrettably, I don't know if we had any other classmates at Jeff's Homecoming on March 7. Chris, Linda, and I got to the funeral home early and sat near the front of the chapel. Between the large number of mourners and the tears in my eyes I did not see anyone I recognized. If any other classmates were there I apologize for not finding you amongst Jeff's many friends.

I contacted the AOG and added Jocelyn to our class e-mail roster so that she will be informed of all future class events. Losing a spouse must be terribly difficult, even more so when there are three young children whose father is no longer there. I hope that Jocelyn will be able to rely on the prayers and assistance of 1000+ Class of '85 friends should she ever need our help in the future.

Lastly, Jeff did not owe me \$20, although while we roomed together he did 'cadet borrow' a few things that I haven't been able to find in the last 25 years (joke #3)! I do, however, owe him a debt of gratitude for being such a good friend and stellar member of our class. We are saddened by Jeff's passing as surely as we are all better people for having known him. I miss you, my friend!

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