



Merwin Lamphrey Morrill

**Cullum No. 21766 • Aug 21 1967 • KIA over North Vietnam
Interred in West Point Cemetery, West Point, NY**

It was mid-morning on that late August day in 1967 when Captain Mel Morrill and three comrades pushed throttles forward on their 105 fighter-bombers and roared off the runway at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base. Bear Flight was on a strike mission against the Yen Vienil yards, six miles northeast of Hanoi, with Mel flying number three in the flight of four. Intense antiaircraft fire was encountered during the bombing pass, and one aircraft was seen to disintegrate and a second explode. Two electronic emergency signals were heard, but no parachutes were seen. When Mel and his wingman failed to check in with Bear Flight Lead, it was assumed theirs were the aircraft observed downed.

Mel was listed as Missing in Action, and, because data were insufficient to justify any change, he was carried in that status and promoted with his peers until April 1978, when a presumptive finding of death was issued. A little over five years later, Mel's remains were released by the North Vietnamese to our government and a change in status to Killed in Action was entered on the rolls. For his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Colonel Mel Morrill was posthumously awarded the Silver Star, the Air Medal (First and Second Oak leaf Clusters) and the Purple Heart.

That was Mel the warrior, but we knew him in other guises as well. He was my roommate and friend. He was a scholar and athlete. He was a husband and father. Perhaps these were the truer measure of the man. It all started on 8 March 1936 in New York City, when a son was born to Harold and Mae Morrill. The family moved to California, where Mel graduated from High School in San Carlos. He enlisted in the Mississippi National Guard in June 1953, was discharged in September 1953, enlisted in the Air Force the next day and was discharged the day we arrived for Beast Barracks. Even then he was irrepressible.

Most of us remember Mel's enthusiasm. That never left him. Most of us, too, recall that he courted and won the hand of Constance Roy, a lady of rare quality who complemented, in every way, Mel's personality. Our memories of Mel and Connie after graduation include their presence at our wedding and sharing back fences during pilot training at Malden, Missouri. It was a time for fun, and we lived it just that way.

We overlapped at Laredo Air Force Base, Texas for a few months in 1959, and that was the last time we saw Mel. His skills were those of a fighter pilot, and his training and assignments took him, Connie and son Todd to places we in bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and transport aircraft did not serve.

During the time Mel was listed as Missing in Action, we visited with Connie whenever we passed

near Newburgh, New York. There, with Todd, she built a new life. She remained strong and, as always, a lady. Connie's health failed her in 1985 and she followed Mel to the peace of the life to come. Both are survived by Todd – **an** honorary member of our class.

War friend, devoted husband and father – all for too short a time. Little more can be said of one who gave his all, except to echo the words of our Alma Mater: “well done, be thou at peace.”

Leo W. Smith, II