

# 1965

## Strength and Drive

Admitted 839

Graduated 596 (including 3 International)

Commissioned: USA 523; USN 2; USAF 57; USMC 6, Disabled upon graduation 5

When the “Sons of the Greatest Generation” entered West Point on 5 July 1961, the United States was booming with industry and the saw the beginning of an Interstate Highway system. The American automotive industry was at it’s peak with no international competition and the phenomenon of television was ubiquitous. President John F. Kennedy was inaugurated on 20 January 1961.

However, all was not well with the World nor at home during the late 50s and early 60s. Allied Powers from WWII, France and Great Britain, were engaged in heavy conflict against communist inspired forces in their former colonies in Southeast Asia and North Africa. The Berlin Wall went up in 1961. Close to home, Caribbean countries were experiencing revolutions with Cuba establishing a Communist Government 90 miles offshore. President Eisenhower stated his Domino Theory that would eventually involve the Class of '65 in Vietnam. At home, forced desegregation in Southern schools was causing major social rift. At West Point, military emphasis for 1965 gradually evolved from Europe toward Southeast Asia and the Caribbean was still a concern. By graduation, President Kennedy had been assassinated and the Vietnam War had started.

At graduation, the Class of 1965 was the first class allowed to branch other than the then five Combat Arms with the stipulation that all would serve their first two years in CA. Also, '65, like '64 before them, attended Ranger School en masse in lieu of Officers Basic Course.

Initial assignments for some were in units bound for Vietnam; others in European assignments immediately assumed command because of the Vietnam build up. Vietnam was a defining life point for all members of the Class of '65 with virtually every member serving at least one tour. The class lost 25 in Vietnam to include their First Captain **Bob Arvin**. The members of the Class distinguished themselves in combat with one graduate, **Paul (Bud) Bucha** being awarded the Medal of Honor and one former member, **James Gardner** also receiving the MOH. Four received the Distinguished Service Cross.. Many of the Class resigned after Vietnam and went on very successful careers in other fields to include medicine, engineering, law, education, business and finance.

Those who remained on active duty assumed positions of greater responsibility. **Wes Taylor**, in the first combat since Vietnam, led the lead assault element, the 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Rangers) into Grenada in Urgent Fury 1983. Many members became District Engineers, Division and Corps Commanders and **Eric Shinseki** became the Chief of Staff of the Army before becoming the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. **Dan Christman** became the 55th Superintendent of USMA. Nineteen members of the Class attained General Officer rank.