





















1LT HOWIE PONTUCK WALL OF DISTINCTION

Members of the Army Gymnastics Community who have achieved a career of professional excellence and service, and whose extraordinary service and support has contributed greatly to the development of leaders of character for the United States Army and the Nation.

 <p>Those Army Gymnasts who made the Ultimate Sacrifice</p>			 <p>GAR D'ALMEIDA '58</p>	 <p>BOBBY SPRAGUE '57</p>			<p>Those Army Gymnasts who made the Ultimate Sacrifice</p> <p>WW II</p> 
 <p>Those Army Gymnasts who made the Ultimate Sacrifice</p>	 <p>LOU GROSS '54</p>	 <p>RUDOLPH DADO '58</p>	 <p>JOHN LINDHOUSER '58</p>	 <p>NEAL CHRISTIAN '53</p>		<p>Those Army Gymnasts who made the Ultimate Sacrifice</p> <p>KOREAN WAR</p> 	
	 <p>TERRANCE WILSON '61</p>	 <p>HOWARD S. PONTUCK '66</p> <p>1LT Howard "Howie" Samuel Pontuck was a 3-year All-American during his tenure at West Point and Captain for the 1988 Army Gymnastics Team. Howie was commissioned as an Infantry officer upon graduation. His service led him to Vietnam where, on March 26, 1968, while serving as a Military Assistance B Training Team Leader in the Phong Dinh Province, he was tragically killed by an M16 round fired by an NVA in Southeast Asia and returned home on October 1968 and September 1972.</p>	 <p>FRANK HORTON '53</p>				
	 <p>VIVIE MARSHALL '61</p>	 <p>NERI LIGHTMEIER '55</p>	 <p>LEWIE HEIDENREICH '51</p>	 <p>THOMAS SELCHEY</p>	 <p>ROBERT BEARD '59</p>		
<p>WEST POINT GYMNASTS WHO ATTAINED THE RANK OF GENERAL</p> <p>WEST POINT GYMNASTS WHO ATTAINED THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL</p> <p>WEST POINT GYMNASTS WHO ATTAINED THE RANK OF MAJOR GENERAL</p> <p>WEST POINT GYMNASTS WHO ATTAINED THE RANK OF BRIGADIER GENERAL</p>		 <p>PUNCH JAMISON '61</p>	 <p>SAM PILLSCH '72</p>				
						<p>Those Army Gymnasts who made the Ultimate Sacrifice</p> <p>AFGHANISTAN</p> 	

DUTY ★ HONOR ★ COUNTRY

DEDICATED TO

Howard Samuel Pontuck USMA'66

OCTOBER 2, 1943 – MARCH 8, 1968

Early Life

Howie was born in New York City. Harold Schiffer, a longtime friend of Howie, who as young kids worked with him selling ice cream at Coney Island, NY, and who later was a member of the New York City Police Department, said of Howie, “A nice, gentle, fine person was Howard Pontuck. I will always remember his smile, decency and concern for others.” Howie is remembered by his younger brother, Joel, who resides in Staten Island, NY: “Howie was always doing the right thing. He never got into trouble and cared about the family. He believed in something bigger than himself. Lincoln High school did not come easy to Howie—he was always studying. He went to a local college and at a gymnastics competition he was approached by a scout from West Point and encouraged to apply to the Academy. He did and went to West Point the following year as a member of the Class of 1966.”

Taken from 1966 Howitzer

HOWARD SAMUEL PONTUCK
Brooklyn, New York C-3

The “Littlest Muscle” joined the Corps after a childhood in the wilds of New York City. His determination to excel has proven him an able competitor and a fitting gymnastics Captain. His friendly smile, and his willingness to help others will be remembered by all and will carry him toward a successful career.

Gymnastics 4, 3, 2, 1, Captain 1; Jewish Choir 4, 2, 1; French Club 2.

Sergeant 1.

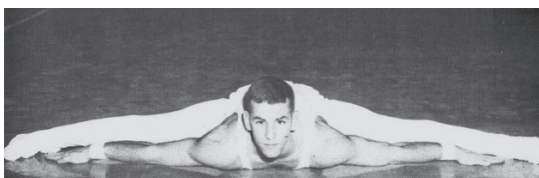
On January 15, 2022, the 1LT Howie Pontuck Wall of Distinction was dedicated in the Lou Gross Sports Center at West Point New York. Howie was loved by all who knew him and excelled as a Gymnast and Soldier. The Wall of Distinction was dedicated to his memory and to recognize other West Point Gymnasts who have made significant contributions to the Army and the Nation following graduation, including those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in war, those who attained the rank of General Officer, those who earned a Valor award, and those who were Prisoners of War.

The Lou Gross Sports Center officially opened in February 2002, primarily due to the generosity of lead donors Herb Lichtenberg, USMA '55 and Lou Gross, USMA 54. Until that time, gymnasts trained in the 4th Floor gymnasium. The gym was renovated and named in 2005 for 1st Captain Robert “Bob” Arvin, USMA'65, who was killed in Vietnam in 1968.

West Point Gymnastics

COL(R) Tad Ono, USMA'65 Team Captain remembers Howie: "The first thing one noticed about Howie was his smile-natural, genuine, sincere. The next thing you noticed was how he spoke to you in the most-friendly, genuinely nice, soft-manner. He did not have that fast, often brusque mannerism that many New Yorkers have. As a gymnast, the best description I can give is graceful. He worked hard on his form and had the best toe point of anyone. He was very diligent in practice, worked harder than anyone and was the best cheer leader for his teammates. It was no surprise to me that his teammates voted him to their captain in his senior year. In short, he was a highly respected and well-liked member of the gymnastics team."

Another team member, MG(R) John Longhouser, USMA'65, recalls "I remember Howie as quiet and unassuming. He listened rather than spoke. He was adept at listening to Coach and quickly adjusting/adding to his routines. That made Howie a gymnast constantly improving which led to great success."



From COL(R) Tory Wilson, USMA'66, "This was taken Yearling year when we were in company M-1. I went looking for Howie and found him in this position. Alarmed, I moved to spot but seeing the spotter was on task, I held back. Howie did not flinch. When he looked over, I shot the photo. He didn't just do an up and off, he held it for a long time. It was something to behold."





Yearling Year Team Photo (1964). The team had a 6-2 Won/Loss record and Army beat Navy 158.4 to 153.75. Howie Pontuck continually took honors in the Free Exercise.



Cow Year Team Photo (1965). The team had a 7-2 Won/Loss Record and beat Navy by a score of 75-43. Hurt by injury, Howie Pontuck worked that much harder to keep Army in the win column. Howie is third from left in front row.

West Point Jewish Chapel

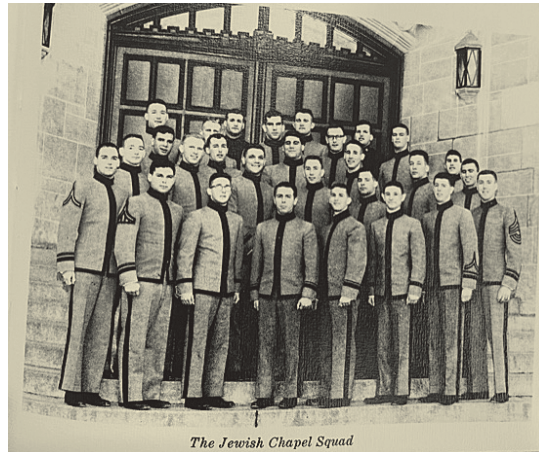
Howie was a member of the Jewish Chapel Choir. LTC(R) Bob Wolff, USMA'65, a fellow gymnast and member of the Jewish Chapel remembers Howie: "Howie showed a quiet resolve to navigate the discipline and busy schedule at the Point, which was not easy for him. Yet, he maintained a positive attitude and enjoyed his time with the Jewish Chapel with the support of Rabbi Soltes and the Jewish Chapel OIC, COL Max Kovel and his wife, Bernice. Max and Bernice were instrumental in supporting Howie and other Jewish cadets during their years at West Point."





**Passover Seder
at the Thayer
Hotel, 1963.
(L to R)
Howie
Tad Ono**

**Bob's Parents:
Bessie Wolff
Herbert Wolff
Bob Wolff
Bob's Girlfriend:
Phyllis Halpern
Wolff**



**Howie was a proud member of
the Jewish Chapel Squad and the
Jewish Chapel Choir. Howie is
first row, 4th from right in 1964.**

Jewish Chapel Choir practices were held every Tuesday night and an occasional special effort for additional practice was put forth after weekly chapel services in the Old Cadet Chapel. There were often difficulties getting everyone together on Tuesday nights because of the small number of eligible participants, but the Choir had a successful season.

The conductor, Steve Eisenberg, and his assistant, Marc Edelman, prepared the group for the trips and for regular chapel services under the superb advice and accompaniment of Sp/4 Joel Kroetzer. The Administration Officer was Ellis Greene and the Cadet-in-Charge was Jim Salander.

The Choir owes thanks to its Officer-in-Charge and his wife, Capt. And Mrs. Max Novel, for their guidance and friendship.



During Howie's years at West Point, the Jewish cadets went to the Old Cadet Chapel, located in the West Point cemetery, for services on Sunday morning. The Jewish Choir was an important feature of the Jewish Chapel, making appearances in synagogues in Florida, Boston and New York. In 1964, for the first time in the history of the Academy, the Jewish children on Post were given the opportunity to go to Sunday school, made possible by Jewish Cadets who became Sunday school Teachers.

Howard Pontuck is seated at the center, with Dick Guthrie “tipping” his helmet at his side and surrounded by the Officers and Forward Observer of Company “B” in 1967.

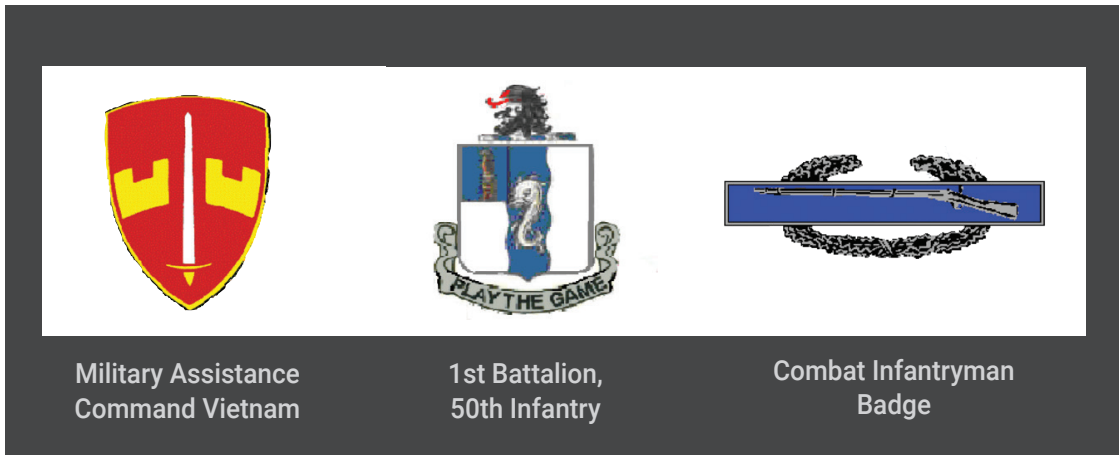


Military Career

1LT Pontuck branched Infantry and briefly commanded Company B of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry at Fort Hood, Texas before the battalion deployed to Vietnam. CPT Guthrie remembers his service with 1LT Pontuck: “On B Company’s first Airmobile operation in Vietnam, we were inserted by helicopter into the 506 Valley—known as “The Valley of the Shadow of Death”—just before sunset. Around midnight we earned the Combat Infantryman’s Badge for our battalion. The following morning, the resupply helicopter came in, and the first to jump out was 1LT Howie Pontuck. He first handed me a folder of documents that needed my signature. I got right to work reading and signing the papers, while he set off around our Night Defensive Position visiting first with the platoon leaders to find out what they needed, and then with the men manning our perimeter. Howie had commanded

the company for some months before I arrived, so he knew all of them by name, and asked about relatives and girlfriends as he passed out words of encouragement until it was time for him to climb onto the back-haul bird. This was a pattern he would follow for the rest of our time together. The men loved and respected him, and I considered him a substantial morale-builder for the entire company.”

His final days remembered by Gary Wehrels: “Over the next few months, whenever Howie and his team came in for resupply and a little R&R, he continued to bunk in my room and we swapped tales of various adventures. He still possessed his gymnastic skills and he amazed us with lots of moves that aren’t easy wearing combat boots! He used to entertain the Vietnamese troops and their families with his moves as well. I was there when Howie died in March



Military Assistance
Command Vietnam

1st Battalion,
50th Infantry

Combat Infantryman
Badge

of '68. He was part of MACV Advisory Team 56 as a MAT (Military Assistance & Training) Team Leader, in Phong Dinh Province, Phong Dien District. Around 8:00 AM the Vietnamese Sgt. Major who was responsible for the compound security stopped by and asked Howie if he would help them disarm the mines in the outside perimeter. The Vietnamese Lieutenant who was responsible had taken off, and the tall grass needed to be cut. Howie had helped to install the mines and knew how they were laid out. I remember him removing his West Point Ring, taking off his fatigue shirt, and checking to see that

he had nothing in his pants pockets that would hinder his movement. Then with a smile he said, "well, we might as well get this over with," off he went to disarm the mines. The Senior District Advisor and I heard the explosion. No one knows for sure exactly what went wrong, but he was killed instantly."

Lt Pontuck He was one of 335 men from West Point who died or are MIA in Southeast Asia/Indochina during the period October, 1957 – September, 1972.

He is Interred in Beth El & Cedar Park Cemetery, Paramus, NJ.





Well done, be Thou at Peace.



Fame will Mix with '66

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Authored by LTC(R) Robert Wolff, Ph.D., USMA'65

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