



Charles F. Thensted '69



No. 28251 ★ Jul 7, 1947 – Aug 13, 2025 ★ Died in New Orleans, LA
Inurned at St. Patrick's Cemetery No. 3, New Orleans, LA

Charles Frederick Thensted carried the character of New Orleans with him to West Point: wry humor, quiet strength, and an unwavering moral compass. As a cadet, he was known for sharp wit, originality, and honesty, qualities that shaped every chapter of his life. He served with courage on the front lines in Vietnam, practiced law with integrity, guided future lawyers as a teacher, and devoted himself wholly to his family. Though naturally private and never one to seek recognition, Charlie always answered when called. He measured his life not in accolades but in the difference he made: protecting soldiers in combat, helping clients and students find their way, and offering steady love to those closest to him.

Charlie was born on July 7, 1947 in New Orleans, the city he returned to after service and made his lifelong home. There he contributed as a lawyer, educator, professional, and devoted family man.

In July 1965, Charlie entered West Point with a principal appointment from Senator Russell B. Long. He began a four-year journey that honed his sense of honor and prepared him for the daunting responsibility of leading soldiers in combat. West Point shaped many young men into leaders; Charlie arrived already grounded in duty and principle, and the Academy refined what was innate.

At West Point he often seemed content to stand quietly in the background, taking everything in. But when he spoke, his words carried weight. In his final year, when the cadet company commander asked the First Classmen for ideas to improve daily life, Charlie offered a

practical solution no one else had imagined: move the firstie gym lockers from the basement to the top-floor latrine in New South Barracks. The change meant cadets could reach physical education right after noon meal, return to their rooms, shower, and still make the next class on time. The plan was bold, efficient, and immediately approved. It was classic Charlie—observant, original, and always thinking of others.

Graduating in 1969, Charlie commissioned into Air Defense Artillery. Like many of his classmates, he went to Vietnam in 1971 during a difficult period for the Army and the nation. He served as a platoon leader on the front lines, commanding a unit of mobile anti-aircraft weapons repurposed for ground combat, often operating near the Cambodian border. Offered safer rear-area assignments for the second half of his tour, Charlie refused, choosing instead to remain with his men rather than leave them to a new, inexperienced officer. His loyalty was unwavering. One of the most harrowing episodes came when his fire support base was overrun by enemy forces. Despite being outnumbered, his platoon held the line and retook their position, several soldiers earning commendations for extraordinary bravery. His men knew he put them first; he earned their complete loyalty in return.

Leaving the Army, Charlie pursued law at Tulane, earning his J.D. in 1977 at the top of his class while serving as editor in chief of the *Tulane Law Review*. His leadership and intellect, evident at West Point and in Vietnam, carried into scholarship and advocacy. He capped his legal education with a Master of Laws from Harvard in 1983, deepening his command of the law.

Charlie practiced as a commercial litigator in New Orleans, handling complex disputes with brilliance and integrity. His practice spanned business litigation, banking, securities, and corporate governance, often at the appellate level, where his rigor and precision shone. Yet he was

never content to let courtroom battles define him. He became an early advocate for alternative dispute resolution, recognizing that costly, protracted litigation often failed to serve clients well. He advanced negotiation and mediation as essential tools for lawyers—ideas still fresh in the 1980s.

From 1984 to 2014, Charlie taught at Tulane Law School as an adjunct professor, creating and leading a course on negotiation and mediation advocacy. Generations of students benefitted from his experiential approach, which stressed the lawyer as problem-solver. Charlie modeled ethical professionalism and gave his students practical skills that would serve them for life. For many, he was more than a professor: He was a mentor whose guidance shaped careers.

Later, Charlie expanded his expertise with an MBA from the University of New Orleans in 1999 and built a successful career as a financial advisor. Once again, he made a difference in people's lives, helping families plan and prepare for the future with the same integrity and thoughtfulness that defined his military and legal careers.

Through every endeavor, Charlie remained devoted to family. He was a loving husband to Terri Hannibal Thensted and a proud father to his son, Charles Joseph. He cherished time with Charles, whether sharing advice, hearing his stories, or watching sports together (always with humor and affection). Charlie's wit and brilliance made him a joy to be around; his steadfastness made him beloved.

Charlie's gift was not to stand in the spotlight but to leave it brighter for others. He embodied integrity without pretense, loyalty without condition, and kindness without effort. Though he is gone, his spirit endures in the laughter he sparked, the lessons he taught, and the quiet strength he modeled. He was truly one of a kind.

Be Thou at Peace.

— *Family and Classmates*