



Benjamin Louis Willis Co A-2

His love and devotion for the “brown boy” was interrupted when “The Colonel” emerged Plebe Year with a Brigade boxing championship and later went on to play three years on the 150 lb. football teams. He will be best remembered by all for his warm personality, quick smile, Southern drawl, and ability to be one step ahead of academics.

Born – 12 June 1938, at Bay Minette, AL.

To USMA – from Bay Minette, AL. Nickname in later life - “Colonel Ben”.

Died – 9 Apr. 2017 (age 78) at Atlanta, GA. Cremated and burial to be determined.

Military Awards – Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB), Presidential Unit Citation.

Schooling – Unknown.

Family – Never married. No immediate survivors.

Contact – North Springs Methodist Church, Address 7770 Roswell Road, Sandy Springs, GA 30350, Phone 770-396-0844, Website www.northspringsumc.org.

Ben served on active duty in the Army (Infantry) for 21 years, retiring in 1982, with the rank of Lt. Colonel. His first assignment was at the Jungle Warfare School in the Panama Canal Zone. He then served in Vietnam (1st and 2nd tours, MACV), Fort Benning, GA (Infantry Advanced Course), ROTC support, Vietnam (3rd and 4th tours, Company Commander, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division), Korea (Battalion Executive Officer, 2nd Infantry Division), Fort Knox, KY (Inspector General, Headquarters, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, HqUSAREC), Fort Hood, TX (Battalion Commander, Mechanized Infantry), Atlanta, GA (Headquarters, Force Command, HqFORSCOM).

After retiring from active duty in the Army, Ben worked with private industry in environmental cleanup and as a private investigator. He experienced a major change in life after God led him to the North Springs Methodist Church. He became a faithful servant leader there, touching many lives for Christ. He was the self-appointed kitchen and fellowship director, known for his “almost famous” pork BBQ with all the “fix’ns”. He organized Church Red Cross Blood Drives and became a state leader in the most pints from churches. Ben passed away on 9 April 2017, from pancreatic cancer.

Footnote from Ben – “.....a total of 45 months (four tours) assigned to Vietnam. The high point was as a Company Commander.....in the 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne during an operation for which the 1st Brigade received the Presidential Unit Citation.....In civilian life, I tried a couple of things, until I finally found what I really wanted to do and that was volunteer work.”

Footnote from General Colin Powell – ‘ He was a tough, but compassionate leader who I counted on during a difficult period when we were transitioning from the conscript to an all-volunteer Army. God rest his soul.’”