



John Alda Kemp, Jr. Co D-2

Four years ago he came down from the hills of West Virginia, determined to civilize the world. Although Aldie may not have "civilized" us all to the extent he would have wished, he has undeniably enriched us all. His ability to say the most unlikely thing at the most unlikely time has cheered our dullest moments.

Born – 3 Feb 1940, Bud, WV.

To USMA – Came from Mullens, WV. Appointed by West Virginia 5th. Nickname – "Aldie".

Died – 8 Aug 1966 (age 26) killed-in-action (KIA), in Vietnam. Buried at West Point.

Military Awards – Purple Heart, Bronze Star Medal, 6 Air Medals (all awarded posthumously).

Schooling – Army Air School.

Family - Wife – Julia (Julie) Ann Castoro Kemp Bruetsch (5 years – three days after graduation, she passed away in May 2004) – 3 children (John Jr, Angel and Joy) – grandchildren?

Contact – John Kemp, Jr. (son), Angel Kemp (daughter) and Joy Kemp (daughter).

John served on active duty in the Army (Artillery) for 5 years, until his untimely death in 1966 in Vietnam, with the rank of Captain. His first assignment was in air defense with Battery D, 4th Missile Battalion, 65th Artillery (IFC Platoon Leader and Executive Officer) in Los Angeles. He then served at Ft. Rucker (Fixed Wing Pilot Training, Army Aviation School), Ft. Sill, OK (Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Artillery Group), and finally Vietnam (Forward Air Controller, 23rd Artillery Group, I Field Force) where he was killed-in-action on 8 August 1966.

One month short of his rotation back to the States, John disappeared while flying cover in his L-19 Bird Dog for a vehicle convoy along Highway One between Ben Hoa and Xaun Loc. After an extensive search that included several of his friends and fellow West Point classmates, no trace of John or his aircraft was found. Seven months later, ground forces found the crash site and recovered John's remains from his shot up aircraft. John's body had been buried near the plane by the crash and his name could still be read on his uniform.

It took 24 years before John's complete sacrifice for his country would be recognized. At the time of his recovery from the jungle, it was noted in letters to Julie from his Commanding Officer that "John's plane had been shot down by enemy ground fire," but the original Casualty Report listed him as a "Non-Battle" casualty.

Footnote from John's hometown newspaper – "He started flying because he wanted to be an astronaut." John dreamed of attending the Air Force Academy and received a Congressional Appointment. Those aspirations would soon be sidetracked though, when John failed the vision test. The failure was not his, but a record keeping error. However, fate and an alternate plan redirected John. By the time the mix-up was discovered, the resourceful young man had implemented Plan B - West Point.