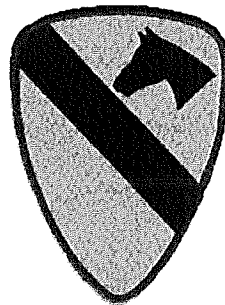




## Major John Alexander Hottell III



Major John Alexander Hottell III, graduated from West Point in 1964, tenth in a class of 564. He was a Rhodes scholar in 1965. In Vietnam he earned two Silver Stars, one as commander of Company B, First Battalion, Eighth Cavalry, First Cavalry Division (Airmobile). He later became the aide to Major General George W. Casey, the First Cavalry Division Commanding General. Both were killed in a helicopter crash on July 7, 1970.

I had the privilege of serving with Major Hottell as my company commander with Bravo Company 1st Battalion 8th Cavalry for the spring and summer months of 1969. In September of 1969 he became the historian for the First Cavalry Division. To say that he had my utmost respect would be an understatement. He was the most impressive person that I had ever met and I have met a lot people in my past 50 years.

While serving as the First Cavalry Division Historian Captain Hottell wrote the following:

"In the heat of battle one hardly has time to stop and think about how well things might be going. In a struggle for survival, valuations are reduced to a simple standard: good is alive; bad is dead or wounded. Then, too, nearly everyone was simply too busy and too involved to allow the luxury of such reflection. The only thing that was really clear was that there was a hell of a fight going on.

To the trooper who has lost a buddy, no amount of figures will be able to make it appear that the battle was a success. For all of us the carnage and wreckage of a bitterly contested battleground is not the atmosphere for exultation, even if the carnage all belongs to the other side. No matter who you are, you cannot help but see mothers and wives in the face of a dead enemy."

After one contact, a diary and some family photos were taken from a dead NVA soldier. The RVN Sgt. who was assigned to our unit translated some of the diary for us. After hearing this soldier's thoughts of his home and his poems we came to the realization that he was no different from any of us. He was merely doing what he was told to do, leaving his family and loved ones behind. I believe Captain Hottell was thinking of this incident when he wrote about seeing the mothers and wives in the face of the dead enemy

After the firefight along the Dong Nai River, Captain Hottell suggested that we all write home a letter, telling our families what they meant to us and the real possibilities of us not returning home. The following letter was written by Captain Hottell to his wife Linda, a year prior to his death.

"I am writing my own obituary for several reasons, and I hope none of them are too trite. First, I would like to spare my friends, who may happen to read this, the usual clichés about being a good soldier. They were all kind enough to me, and I not enough to them. Second, I would not want to be a party to perpetuation of an image that is harmful and inaccurate: "glory" is the most meaningless of concepts, and I feel that in some cases it is doubly damaging. And third, I am quite simply the last authority on my own death.

I loved the Army: it reared me, it nurtured me, and it gave me the most satisfying years of my life. Thanks to it I have lived an entire lifetime in 26 years. It is only fitting that I should die in its service. We all have but one death to spend, and insofar as it can have any meaning, it finds it in the service of comrades in arms.

And yet, I deny that I died FOR anything - not my country, not my Army, not my fellow man, none of these things. I LIVED for these things, and the manner in which I chose to do it involved the very real chance that I would die in the execution of my

duties. I knew this, and accepted it, but my love for West Point and the Army was great enough -- and the promise that I would some day be able to serve all the ideals that meant anything to me through it was great enough - for me to accept this possibility as a part of a price which must be paid for all things of great value. If there is nothing worth dying for - in this sense - there is nothing worth living for.

The Army let me live in Japan, Germany and England with experiences in all of these places that others only dream about. I have skied the Alps, killed a scorpion in my tent [while] camping in Turkey, climbed Mount Fuji, visited the ruins of Athens, Ephesus and Rome, seen the town of Gordium where another Alexander challenged his destiny, gone to the opera in Munich, plays in the West End of London, seen the Oxford-Cambridge rugby match, gone for pub crawls through the Cotswolds, seen the night-life in Hamburg, danced to the Rolling Stones and earned a master's degree in a foreign university.

I have known what it is like to be married to a fine and wonderful woman and to love her beyond bearing with the sure knowledge that she loves me; I have commanded a company and been a father priest, income-tax adviser, confessor, and judge for 200 men at one time; I have played college football and rugby, won the British national diving championship two years in a row, boxed for Oxford against Cambridge only to be knocked out in the first round, and played handball to distraction - and all of these sports I loved, I learned at West Point. They gave me hours of intense happiness.

I have been an exchange student at the German Military Academy, and gone to the German Jumpmaster school. I have made thirty parachute jumps from everything from a balloon in England to a jet at Fort Bragg. I have written an article that was published in Army magazine, and I have studied philosophy.

I have experienced all these things because I was in the Army and because I was an Army brat. The Army is my life, it is such a part of what I was that what happened is the logical outcome of the life I loved. I never knew what it is to fail, I never knew what it is to be too old or too tired to do anything. I lived a full life in the Army, and it has exacted the price. It is only just."