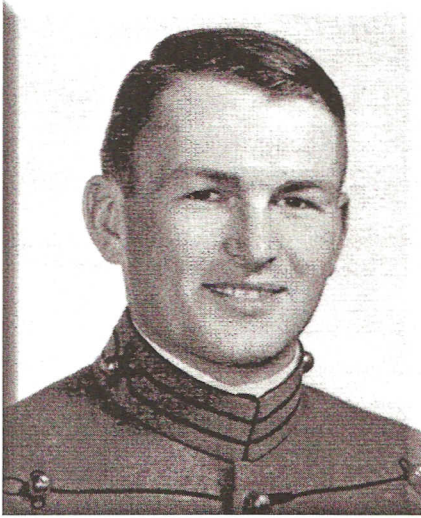


James K. Brierly '67

No. 26774 ■ 2 Feb 1945 — 12 Dec 1968

Died in Binh Dinh Province, Viet Nam ■ Interred in Riverview Cemetery, Streator, IL



James Kenneth Brierly was born in Streator, IL, the first of two sons of CPT (USMC) Kenneth and Mary Brierly. Jim was proud of his family, and they were very important to him. As the son of a Marine, Jim called many places home in his early years until the family finally settled in Carlsbad, CA, in 1958.

Jim made friends easily and immediately became a class leader in student government. He was good at all sports he tried. Jim loved surfing and sailing and lettered multiple years in football, track, and basketball. He also enjoyed the rigors of academics, graduating high school with a 3.9 grade point average. Jim's entrance to the Academy came through his father's service, which allowed Jim to compete for a presidential appointment.

Jim's Plebe year was pretty much like everyone else's. During Yearling summer at Buckner, Jim's friendliness and his inexhaustible energy are well remembered. Proof of this is evident in a picture in the 1967 *Howitzer*, in which everyone in the picture is exhausted except for the big man with the huge smile leaning over the porch—Jim. His father was always a source of pride to him, and Jim carved "USMC" into the M-14 field stock he was issued for Recondo. The cadre was not impressed. During the summer before Cow year, Jim was a squad leader during Beast Barracks. He had a competitive nature and would continually pit his squad against any brave enough to challenge them. Although he hated losing and rarely did, Jim was always gracious in defeat.

Jim loved sports and, throughout his four years, participated in football, lacrosse, and

rugby, which was just catching on at West Point. Jim made the starting A Team. His play was spirited and ferocious, yet he always seemed to be smiling. He led the forwards and played Number 8, the guy at the back of the triangle of forwards who engages the opposing pack in the scrum down to start play. There was a trick play where Jim would fake a release of the ball, but control it with his foot so the opposing scrum half was drawn offside. It was good for a penalty kick once or twice a game. He was a great jumper, and if the team really needed to get the ball in the lineout, it was thrown to Jim. In those days, there was no lifting, and the jumper had to propel himself skyward to collect the thrown ball. Jim was relentless, always encouraging his teammates, always in the thick of things.

It was the same way in academics. He did well. Initially, he wanted to be a Marine like his father, but later he focused on becoming an engineer. He worked hard on his studies, and he was able to select the Corps of Engineers. It was even rumored he taught others how to study with the radio on and not get caught.

Jim knew when to be serious and when to have fun. He stepped naturally into leadership roles with his calm, even manner. Jim was someone upon whom you could always rely, and he commanded a great deal of respect from everyone. A religious man, Jim had the habit of bending his knee and praying beside his bed before retiring for the night. It was genuine, and it just seemed like a natural thing for him to do.

He was handsome and large in stature, but larger in personality and friendship. "Big Jim," the multi-talented surfer from California, graduated in the top quintile of the class; was a cadet captain; a member of the choir, debate team, and various sports teams; and helped package the *Howitzer*.

Ever proud of his father's service in WWII and Korea, Jim took his service to country very seriously. He wanted to get involved as soon as possible and volunteered to go to

Viet Nam. After Ranger training and officer basic (some say he received higher marks in partying than engineering), he went to the 19th Combat Engineers at LZ North English, which was about as far north in the II Corps area as one could go in Binh Dinh Province. This was considered a very dangerous area, since the 19th operated in both I and II Corps and received very little Infantry support on mine sweeps and other activities. Jim's unit pulled mine sweep every morning and repaired roads, culverts, and bridges. As throughout his life, Jim maintained his religious beliefs. He considered the possibility of dying, but he had faith and was not afraid.

On 12 Dec 1968, Jim had to do a "Report of Survey," requiring him to travel to a remote location. Jim had a high sense of duty, and instead of waiting for the regular daily traffic to follow mine sweep and ensure safe travel of the road, Jim and his driver proceeded just minutes behind the mine sweep. A trick of the Viet Cong snipers was to hide while mine sweep went through and then pick off a target directly after. Jim died instantly of a single sniper bullet through his heart. His driver braved repeated AK-47 fire and drove fast to get help, but it was already over.

Jim was laid to rest next to his father and was joined by his mother in 1999. The Pony League baseball field in Carlsbad was renamed "Lt. James K. Brierly Field" and rededicated in 2003 by the Carlsbad mayor, who was Jim's high school football coach.

This tribute is not about the death of a brother, but instead about the life of an extraordinary young man who had such a positive impact on so many during his 23 years with us. Semper Fi. Duty, Honor, Country. Into your arms, Lord, our brother.

Phillip Brierly and Classmates