



Stephen B. Place '57

No. 21254 ■ 2 Oct 1935 – 20 Apr 2009 ■ Died in Arlington, VA
Cremated. Ashes scattered off the coast of La Jolla, CA



Steven Barclay Place, the son of Royal H. '17, and Eve P. Place, was born in Chicago, IL, on 2 Oct 1935 but considered himself a Californian. Settling in San Francisco, where his step-father, BG Robert B. McBride, Jr. '16, was stationed, he graduated from Lowell High School in 1953 and received an appointment to West Point from Senator William F. Knowland of his home state.

An "Army brat," Steve knew what to expect and how to "work the system." He had more fun during his Plebe year than most classmates, parrying upper-classmen with his quick wit and unnerving ability to do things differently. Never providing too much information to questions, he preferred to furnish only the barest of essentials. "Where are you from, Mr. Place?" would be answered, "San Francisco." never "San Francisco, CA." He just felt everyone should know where San Francisco was located.

Company mate Cal DeWitt remembers Steve unselfishly spending time coaching Plebe classmates in any subject they requested.

Once during Plebe year, Steve was water corporal at his table, and the First Classman table commandant, who used to harass Plebes throughout the meal, took his empty water glass, banged it twice on the table, and threw it down the table to Steve. Steve caught the glass, filled it with water, banged the glass twice on the table and threw it back to the table commandant who, surprised by the response, failed to catch it and was drenched. Steve knew nothing would happen to him because the First Classman should not have thrown the empty glass at him in the first place. Of course, Steve did not eat much until new tables were assigned, but none of the Plebes at that particular table ate much anyway.

Steve didn't have any problems with his studies. Maintaining a low profile, he rarely ran afoul of the tactical department. After Plebe year, Steve continued his tutoring but also undertook Sunday School teaching, which he pursued for all four years at West Point. He also was involved in debate council and the chapel choir. Charlie Erb remembers Steve as being "a good partner to have in juice class, so we wouldn't electrocute ourselves."

An early advocate of hi-fidelity recordings when only the determined few had the "know how," Steve patiently fiddled with the new line of equipment (woofers, tweeters, pre-amps, special turntables with expensive and very delicate needles, condensers, modulators and the like). Roommate John Sankey recalls that when he would hook it up on a Sunday afternoon, there would be wires running all over the room. Then, he would stretch out "in the sack" with stereo headphones on and just enjoy the sound. Steve also worked at the cadet radio station, KDET, and became one of the first disc jockeys. Other cadet activities included Russian Club and Dialectic Society.

Occasionally philosophical, he used to relish exchanging famous quotes. Since he favored those of Ralph Waldo Emerson, classmates began calling him "Waldo." He liked the name, and years later would sign his letters, "Waldo."

Initially, Steve considered Artillery or the Engineers, but after Cow Trip, where he flew T-28 and T-33 trainers and did well, he made the Air Force his career choice. After graduation, he was assigned for pilot training to Hondo AB, TX, where the "wash out" rate was high, among them Steve Place.

Reassigned to the 682nd Air Control and Warning Squadron, he became an air controller. After two years, he received orders to Royal Air Force Chicksands Airbase in the United Kingdom, near the legendary Bletchley Park (of Enigma fame). Steve enjoyed this communications assignment and the opportunity to travel in Europe.

After Great Britain, he was selected to attend the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) for an master of science in electrical engineering, graduating in 1964. Next, Steve spent four years with the Space Division of AFSC in Los Angeles. During this tour

he met and married Clarissa Ann "Ann" Schneidewind on 16 Jul 1966 in Palos Verdes, CA. The Places then moved east to Andrews AFB and the Air Force Systems Command headquarters for the next four years. In 1972, during the latter days of the Vietnam War, he was assigned to Task Force Alpha and the 1987th Command Squadron, Thailand, Udorn RTAFB. He then returned to California, collected his family, and headed to Keesler AFB for communications and electronics school. Steve then was assigned to the International Military Staff at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, where the Places met many new friends and enjoyed showing their family Europe. Ann, an "Army brat," had grown up in Italy, Germany and Austria and knew Europe well.

The next four years were spent on the Air Staff in the Pentagon, after which he moved to Defense Communications Agency for a four-year tour. He completed his Air Force career at the Air Force Inspection and Safety Center at Norton AFB, CA, retiring in June 1987 as a colonel. Steve and Ann ended their marriage in the late 80s but remained friendly and continued to enjoy their family together.

In retirement, Steve returned to California and spent the next five years working for Space Applications Corporation. In 1992, he formed his own company, Omniscience Ltd., in Fresno, CA. In the words of daughter Kim, "Omniscience was a project Dad worked on, not really a job ... more of a hobby." He spent the rest of his life pursuing reading, music, local politics (particularly environmental issues), gardening and California travel. When his health began to fail, he moved east to be near family. Ever the optimist, he had hoped to return to California.

Steve loved his Air Force career but was happy to leave it behind and enjoy nearly 20 years without having to work at all. A true Californian, he was happiest on the west coast.

Steve died on 20 Apr 2009. Surviving are his daughter, Kimberley Place-Gateau (Jamie), and sons, Christopher Michael Place (Stephanie and son, Joshua Tyler Place) and Carl Stewart Place (Linjun Song).