

Anthony M. Solberg '57

No. 21286 ■ 19 Mar 1935 – 10 Jan 2004 ■ Died in Bel Air, MD
Interred in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA



Anthony Maurice “Tony” Solberg entered this world on 19 Mar 1935 in La Crosse, WI, the only son of Dorothy and Maurice Solberg. As an only child, he developed friendships that would last a life time with a group of his peers called “The River Rats,” who remained constant companions through elementary and high school. Tony attended Aquinas High School in his home town. As these friends prepared for college, the future looked grim; financial help must be available if Tony were to attend college. With the assistance of a very industrious mother and the good Sisters of the high school, all of whom recognized his potential, Tony was encouraged to apply for an appointment to West Point. Once the requirements had been completed, Tony received an appointment from his local Congressman and entered West Point in July of 1953.

Life at the Academy soon became routine and, at times, enjoyable. His quiet manner and acceptance of the way of the military gave him time to pursue other activities. He became a member of the Class committee, played a wicked game of handball and was a Catholic Acolyte all four years. He became a corporal Cow year and commander of Company E-2 in First Class year but found time to romance his high school sweetheart. On 15 Jun 1957, he married Carol Ann Vondrashek at St. Thomas Moore Parish in La Crosse, WI.

After attending the Armor Officer Basic course at Ft. Knox, KY, and Airborne School, Tony and Carol reported to Ft. Hood, TX. No sooner had they arrived than they were joined by the newly inducted Elvis Presley. Elvis became a fine soldier, but he might not have survived were it not for Tony's quick thinking on the grenade range. Prematurely

pulling the pin on a grenade he was supposed to throw, Elvis froze. Tony, standing nearby, calmly reached over, plucked the grenade from Elvis' hand, and threw it down range. Elvis followed the Solbergs to Germany and again was in Tony's company. This time they were both celebrities, performing in the movie *G.I. Blues*, Elvis the rock star and Tony driving his tank in the background.

Tony's first assignment overseas was with Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Armor in Friedberg, Germany. Tony quickly went from platoon leader to company executive officer. Known for his competence, on promotion to captain he became the S-3 Air for the battalion. It was then on to Ft. Benning, GA, as one of the few officers in the unit selected to attend the Infantry Officer Career Course.

Tony then was sent to the University of Illinois for a master of science degree in mechanical engineering that led to a teaching assignment at West Point, where he earned the Army Commendation Medal. Following a below-the-zone promotion to lieutenant colonel, his next assignment was as senior advisor to the Republic of Vietnam Military Academy. His performance earned him a Legion of Merit and a Bronze Star plus selection to the Command & General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. From there it was on to command the 4th Squadron, 12th Cavalry, the mechanized Infantry division's armored Cavalry squadron, a prime combat arms assignment.

In 1972, based on his engineering background, Tony was assigned to the Test and Evaluation Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground. While there he was first assigned as a member of the Plans and Operations Division. His last assignment before retirement was as secretary of the general staff. In the meantime, he spent a year with the Military Assistance Group in Iran. His service at Aberdeen was recognized by the awarding of a second Legion of Merit.

He developed quite a reputation at Aberdeen. At his retirement luncheon, 130 persons attended, quite in contrast to the usual 20–25. Many of the gifts recognized his “Golden Tongue” for his reputation as the orator of TECOM; a very sharp pencil

for always being so close to the point; and a bent saber because Tony used it so efficiently to cut the red tape.

Upon retirement, Tony did not miss a step in putting his expertise to work in the civilian industrial community, becoming the vice president of Dynamic Science Corporation, from which he retired in 1995. He now had time to devote himself more fully to his family's activities with the same enthusiasm that he exhibited in his military and civilian careers.

Tony and Carol have five children, Kathryn, Mark, Peter, Barbara and Jeanne, who have now produced ten grandchildren. Two of the offspring are engineers, one a retired Air Force master sergeant, a speech pathologist and an IT specialist. Always supportive of his children, their activities provided many hours of entertainment. Tony was an avid supporter of girls sports, teaching daughter Barb how to pitch when the high school softball team needed a pitcher and actively coaching softball for many years. To his delight, Barb was inducted into Minnesota's Softball Hall of Fame.

As life became more difficult, Tony could no longer do many of the activities he delighted in. But true to his devotion to the grandchildren and their activities, he attended every track and cross country meet in his motorized scooter. Grandson Patrick was chosen Athlete of the Year, and Tony was there to enjoy this honor. As the grandchildren went to college, a basketball rivalry developed among the colleges, University of Maryland, Clemson, Virginia Tech and Duke. His support of Duke and Coach K's basketball teams set the stage for much of this rivalry. Tony had taught Mike Krzyzewski at West Point.

Never a complainer and one to make the best of all situations, he died as he lived, true and faithful to West Point's motto, Duty, Honor, Country and at home, surrounded by his family.

—BG Raymond Bell,
Carol A. Solberg, and the family