

A TRIBUTE TO THE DECEASED LADIES OF THE CLASS OF 1957

Proverbs 31: “When one finds a worthy wife, her value is beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good and not evil all the days of her life. She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come. Many are the women of proven worth, but you have exceeded them all.”

More than half a century ago (64 years to be precise) many of you saw us off as we left home for West Point in the summer of 1953. You helped us through Beast Barracks with your cheery notes. You were our OAOs (One and Onlys) at home or at West Point. You cheered us through Gloom Periods. You memorized train, plane, and bus schedules, dragged your own luggage, squeezed into tiny dorm rooms at the Thayer, and were the Belles of the Ball at Cadet Hops. Gourmet dining was a milk shake and a burger in the Weapons Room. You were content with a rare phone call and even more rare letters, yet your steady stream of mail brightened our lives. On Flirtation Walk you prevented the foundations of our Rockbound Highland Home from crashing down upon us. We counted the days until our Christmas and summer leaves when again we might be with you. On Graduation Day you pinned our gold bars on our shoulders on the Plain at West Point. You walked with us hand in hand, beneath an arch of sabers on our wedding day. You left your home and family and “joined the Army/Air Force too.”

Some of you came into our lives after West Point, winning our hearts as we pursued our military duties. With your special charm you turned tiny apartments and houses into homes that we treasured together. You conceived, bore, nursed, and nurtured our children. You pulled up stakes, squeezed into station wagons, and moved our children and other treasures about the world from one assignment to another. You pressed our uniforms and sewed unit patches on our fatigues and flight suits, pledging your loyalty with ours to the mission. You pinned new rank on our shoulders when we were promoted, and held high your umbrella and with your smile brought us sunshine when the world rained on our parade. When we were away in the field or on rotation you taught our children their prayers, helped them with their homework, and reminded them that their daddies still loved them though they were far away. You bandaged their wounds, and cheered them on their friendly fields of strife. You made each homecoming memorable. Our awards, decorations, degrees, and honors were yours, because you were the strong women who stood behind us, who inspired us to reach beyond our grasp.

Some of you entered our lives still later, sometimes after our lives had run upon the rocks. You saw something special in us, and you charted your course with ours. Together we sailed on to brighter horizons. If the nation is more secure because of our service, then it is stronger because of your virtues. All of you left us far too soon when God called you to Himself. Your unique virtues wove the fabric of the richness and fullness of the lives we enjoyed together. You are ever in our thoughts, in our prayers, in our hearts. Each of you is a Pearl of Great Price; together you are a priceless necklace of pearls in the Kingdom of God.

Thanks to the author, Don Sheehan, D-2, Class of '56