



Richard H. Kelley '70



No. 28826 ★ May 4, 1948 – Dec 15, 2012 ★ Died in Ennis, TX
Cremated. Inurned at West Point Cemetery, NY

Born at the historic Army post of Fort Sill, OK on May 4, 1948, *Richard Hugh "Rich" Kelley* was destined to be a soldier. His parents, Everett and Cathren "Katy" (Beall) Kelley, moved to Mineral Wells, TX, where Rich spent his formative years. He was an accomplished athlete and student leader and really excelled in academics, graduating as the valedictorian of his class and receiving an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point as a member of the Class of 1970.

Rich quickly adapted to the rigors of West Point. His ability to move further and faster than any of his classmates earned him the endearing (and admiring) nickname of "Ping." He was very demanding of himself, striving for perfection and excelling in all his endeavors. While we all admired Rich for his many achievements, it was not his achievements that endeared him to us; it was his penchant for helping others—his willingness to help any of his friends, especially in academics—that made a lasting impression on his classmates. Rich had the uncanny ability to take difficult, complex mathematical and scientific concepts and distill them down to their basic elements, understandable to all. Rich helped many of us "goats" (cadet term for academically challenged classmates) surmount countless academic obstacles in several subjects. As Ben Bentley recalled: "I will tell you that there was not a more selfless guy than Rich with his time and his intelligence. He conducted many 'poop' sessions that pulled many of us goats

through the Academy. We will be forever indebted to Rich." Throughout his four years at the Academy, Rich routinely wore gold stars on his collar, signifying he was in the top five percent of his class in academics.

Athletically, Rich was a stalwart on the company intramural wrestling and football teams. He was a consummate team player. His company mate Pete Lilly said: "Rich was a loyal classmate at West Point and a true friend. I will never forget playing intramural football plebe year for Company D-4 with Rich and Vernon Stockwell. We bonded so naturally, and our team was reasonably good!" However, Rich found his true calling his cow year when he joined the West Point Rugby Club. He loved getting "down and dirty" in the scrum and was a mainstay for the "Ruggers."

On June 3, 1970, Rich was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. He served in the 317th Engineer Battalion in Germany from 1971 through 1972. Returning stateside in 1973, Rich served honorably in the 8th Engineer Battalion at Fort Hood, TX and left active duty in 1975 to pursue his dream of becoming a nuclear engineer.

In 1975, Rich was accepted into the graduate nuclear engineering program at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. Texas A&M's nuclear engineering program is perennially recognized as one of the top four programs in the United States, and Rich excelled in this challenging environment, earning a Master of Science degree in nuclear engineering in 1976.

Armed with his nuclear engineering degree, Rich embarked on a very successful career. He worked for the Exxon corporation, Boston Edison Company, and, finally, the Energy Corporation, as a supervisor and nuclear engineer from 1984 through 2005. Rich served as the chief engineer responsible for the safe operation of a huge nuclear power plant located in close proximity to a heavily populated area.

Saddled with this enormous responsibility, Rich humbly said, "If Homer Simpson can handle it, so can I."

While pursuing his nuclear engineering career, Rich continued to serve in the U.S. Army Reserve for 13 years, graduating from the Army Command and General Staff Officer College and attaining the field grade rank of major. As his company mate Colonel Wayne M. Barth said, "I have never met, or served with since, a more reliable soldier."

On December 25, 1985, Rich married Diane Williams Bush, and they made their home in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

One quality that particularly endeared us to Rich was his keen insights. Consistent with his ability to simplify challenging academic concepts, Rich had a keen grasp of human nature, as well as the fundamental realities of life. At the conclusion of our 25th reunion, Rich commented that during the reunion our recurring conversations had generally been about our children and our careers. Rich then made the insightful prediction: "From our next reunion forward, health issues will dominate our conversations." Sadly, Rich was right, for at our 30th reunion we all lamented Rich's debilitating stroke that he suffered not long after he made his prediction.

If there was a silver lining to that dark cloud, it was Rich's loving wife, Diane. She was a nurse, skilled in caring for stroke patients, and Diane lovingly cared for Rich until God called him home in December 2012.

Richard Kelley was a devoted family man, superb soldier, extremely competent nuclear engineer, and a loyal, caring friend. He was the kind of man you knew you could rely on in a crisis. He touched many lives and will be fondly remembered by those of us fortunate enough to have known him. Well Done, Rich; Be Thou at Peace.

— *Classmates*