

Robert Littleton Phillips

Born: August 10, 1946 at Fort McPherson, Fulton County, Georgia
High School: Therrell High School, Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia (1960-1964)
NGC years: 1964 – 1968
Death: May 6, 1970 in Cambodia, the Viet Nam War

Robert Littleton Phillips was born on August 10, 1946 at Fort McPherson, Fulton County, Georgia. Bob was the second child of eight children born to Major and Mrs. Claude Robert Phillips, Jr. In 1949, Bob, his older sister and his mother accompanied Major Claude Phillips to live in Stuttgart Germany. Subsequently, the family of five moved to Bremen, Germany. The family of six returned to the United States on August 31, 1953.¹ They lived in Hammond, Indiana, until the family of seven returned to the Fort McPherson area in 1957.² In 1963 Major Claude Robert Phillips, Jr. retired from the Army where his career began on September 24, 1941.³ Bob lived at 1541 Willowbrook Drive SW, Atlanta, Georgia from 1957 until 1967. He spent the remainder of his childhood in Southwest Atlanta delivering newspapers, in the Boy Scouts and as an active member of the Southwest Christian Church. In 1959 he graduated from Venetian Hills Elementary School in Southwest Atlanta. Bob attended Brown High School for school year 1959-60 and was transferred to Therrel High School when it opened in 1960. Bob graduated from Therrell High School in 1964 where he was a member of the Band, Football and Baseball teams. Bob was a strong swimmer and spent the summers of 1964, 1965 and 1966 as a Life Guard at the Fort McPherson Officer's Club pool. Although the family of ten moved to Oxford, Georgia in 1967, Bob never lived there. Like many of the first born sons of World War II career soldiers, Bob wanted to serve his country as an Army Officer.

While at North Georgia College, Bob was in Band Company, played the saxophone and named the Outstanding Band Cadet. He excelled as a cadet and in Mathematics and was named a "Superior Cadet". Bob was a member of the Glee Club and Sigma Theta. During his senior year Bob chose the Infantry Branch for his career choice in the Army. He was selected as a Distinguished Military Student, member of the prestigious Scabbard and Blade and was the Cadet Colonel Brigade Commander and highest ranking military student on campus. On June 2,

¹ Ancestry.com; New York Passenger Lists, 1820 – 1957, Claude R. Phillips, Air Passenger Manifest, Flying Tiger Line, Departs Rhein Mein, Germany, Aug 31, 1953, Arrives Idlewild, New York Aug 31, 1953; Lists Major Claud R. Phillips Jr. age 35, Margret J. Phillips age 28, Patricia L. Phillips age 8, Robert L. Phillips age 6, June C. Phillips age 2, and Jonathan O. Phillips age 1.

² Ancestry.com; US City Directories, 1822 – 1995, Claude Robert Phillips, Jr.

³ Ancestry.com; Major Claude Robert Phillips, Jr., Military Records, and his April 2014 Obituary.

1968, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics, Cum Laude, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Infantry in the Regular Army of the United States.⁴

Effective June 2, 1968, Second Lieutenant Phillips was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. While assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division, he was temporarily assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia, for the Airborne School beginning July 1, 1968; the Infantry Officers Basic Course during August and September; and the Ranger School beginning in November and graduating on January 22, 1969. In January 1969 Bob married Jane A. Graham, a college classmate, and moved back to Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

First Lieutenant Phillips was reassigned to Viet Nam and arrived there on August 12, 1969. On May 5, 1970, Bob had been in command for 3 months of "C" Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. First Lieutenant Jim Goins (NGC Class of 1967) was in command of "D" Company. The battalion was completing a 3 day stand down to rearm, resupply, reequip, retrain and perform reconnaissance before flying into a new area of operation. Jim Goins and Bob talked about the next day's operation and that Jim's landing zone (LZ) was 2 km. south of Bob's LZ. They discussed why it was necessary to set your men up first to accomplish the mission and obtain fire superiority before taking care of the wounded in order to accomplish the mission and minimize the number of casualties.

On May 6, 1970, after First Lieutenant Phillips had a platoon on the ground and the Platoon Leader had been shot, they discovered that the landing zone was overrun with North Vietnamese Forces. The landing of the remainder of First Lieutenant Phillips' company at that LZ was halted until the units on the ground could re-establish superior firepower and control the LZ. Lieutenant Phillips was still in the air when the order to cease further landing at the LZ was given, but redeployment of the airborne assets was not yet determined. Somehow Bob convinced the pilot to land, and said that there were good men down there and he wasn't going to stop until they were able to reach safety. After landing at the C Company LZ, First Lieutenant Phillips re-deployed his assets; obtained fire superiority; and secured his LZ. Late in the day Bob was loading the wounded onto Dustoffs. As he was laying smoke for another medivac, Bob was shot in the back of the head and died instantly.

For gallantry in action on May 6, 1970, First Lieutenant Phillips was posthumously promoted to the rank of Captain and was awarded our Nation's third highest Valor award - the Sliver Star. Other awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, National Defense Service

⁴ North Georgia Senior Yearbook, Class of 1968, and his May 1970 Obituary.

Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Sharpshooter Badge w/Rifle Bar and the coveted Ranger Tab.⁵

Captain Robert Littleton Phillips was buried in the Oxford Historical Cemetery, Oxford, Georgia and remained there for 40 years until he was reinterred in the family plot in Circle View Cemetery, Social Circle, Georgia.⁶ Bob was a friend to everyone that knew him. He was smart, admired, highly respected and well liked. He is the epitome of the best and brightest of his generation.

The Author: Ed Gross is also the first born son of a career World War II Army Officer. My wife and Bob were in the same classes at Venetian Hills Elementary School and he was also her Paper Boy. I met Bob after the 10th grade at the Fort McPherson Officer' Club Pool where we took Senior Lifesaving and were Life Guards for the next 3 summers. At North Georgia College Bob and I were Mathematics Majors with Physics Minors and had the same classes almost every quarter of every year. We graduated and were commissioned together.

Contributing to this biography were Jim Goins, Ed Chamberlain, Bob Suchke and Charlie Phillips. As it is with all of our commissioned classmates and Vietnam Veterans, "but by the grace of God, go I."

⁵ National Personnel Records Center, The National Archives: Captain Robert Littleton Phillips; Official Personnel Military File, abbreviated.

⁶ Ancestry.com; Find a Grave, Captain Robert L. Phillips memorial web page; Hugh Preacher, Web Page Manager.