

## OC20-69

### Did we have something special?

1968...

1968 was a turning point in U.S. history, a year of triumphs and tragedies, social and political upheavals that forever changed our country. In the air, America reached new heights with NASA's Apollo 8 orbiting the moon and Boeing's 747 jumbo jet's first flight. However, all was not well on the ground: the country lost a Navy intelligence ship (USS Pueblo) and two proponents of peace—Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. Other events that made history that year include the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive, riots in Washington, DC, the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1968, and heightened social unrest over the Vietnam War, values, and race.

1968...deadliest of the Vietnam War for America and its allies with **27,915 ARVN soldiers killed and the Americans suffering 16,592** killed compared to around two hundred thousand PAVN/VC killed.

(By the way...1,475 Army Lieutenants killed during Vietnam War - most of any rank!)

**Meanwhile, IN SPITE OF THIS GLOOMY ENVIRONMENT, 235 enlisted army candidates for OCS are assigned to class OC20-69. Due to OCS being the primary source for needed platoon leaders for Vietnam, Ft. Benning facilities are stretched to capacity. No OCS staff is available until early 1969 so jump school becomes the majority choice for most of the OC20-69 class. Airborne OCS is born!** Marching we sang: Airborne OCS, you look at us you see the best!

### Did we have something special?

1969... 20 June ... 187 candidates from OC20-69 are commissioned 2nd Lieutenants.

December 23, 1968 release of Pueblo crew by North Korea creates need for increased Army presence in South Korea for autumn 1969. Following graduation, 32 graduates of OC20-69 receive orders for Korea after a 30-day leave. OCS COMMANDANT PREDICTS ONE IN THREE OF US GRADUATING WERE AT ODDS TO BE KILLED IN VIETNAM! FORTUNETLY, ONLY 7 OF OUR CLASSMATES WERE KILLED. SO, THIS INAPPROPRIATE COMMENT WAS OFF BY 55. SCREW YOU... SIR!

### Did we have something special?

Fast forward 40 years to 2009...out of hibernation, classmates Mike (Tex) Lattimer, Bob Hodges, Gene Kennedy, et al, plan and uncover current contact

information of virtually every classmate. Contacts are made to announce a 40 year reunion of graduation date at Ft. Benning, GA.!

I can vividly remember the “shock & awe” that telephone call was for me. Their Campaign results...66 classmates with many spouses and significant others descend on FT. Benning for one spectacular reunion!

Memorial Pavers, outside the newly opened Infantry Museum were created for our fallen 7 classmates and roses placed.

## **Did we have something special?**

**Now from this first reunion, we have enjoyed the following reunions:**

2010 Washington, DC

2012 Pensacola, FL

2014 Louisville, KY

2016 San Antonio, TX

2019 Nashville, TN

And now 2022 Branson, MO

At every get together, there is magic in the air, with ear-to-ear smiles, hugs, and stories more embellished with each reunion. Nobody leaves without a warm feeling that this truly has been a special group of men at a special time in our lives that we shared together.

Will it end here with the Branson Reunion?

Maybe, but the many memories will stay in our hearts and minds forever.

**Duty, Honor, Country. . . truly lived!**

## **Did we have something special?**

**I'll let you answer that. . .**

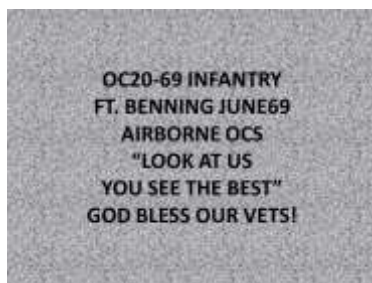


Figure 1 Paver at NATIONAL MUSEUM UNITED STATES ARMY Ft. Belvoir, VA