



USMA 1950 Memorial Articles

John Herbert Pigman

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Died 21 February 1978 in Baltimore, Maryland, aged 51 years
Interment: West Point Cemetery, West Point, New York

THE UNTIMELY DEATH of John H. Pigman, Class of 1950, deeply shocked his many friends in both the military and civilian communities. Jack was such a vibrant, active person. At age 51, in the prime of his life, he was struck with leukemia. He battled valiantly, as was his custom, but passed away quickly.

Born on 21 December 1926 and raised in Cloquet, Minnesota, one of his teachers there said of Jack, "He was the most outstanding of the more than 10,000 students I have taught." People often felt that way about Jack, he was indeed outstanding.



In February 1944 Jack enlisted in the Army Specialized Reserve Training Program and trained at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His leadership ability was quickly recognized with an appointment as cadet segreant. His training program completed, he was sent to Fort Leavenworth as a private, Air Corps Enlisted Reservist. While there, he applied for and won a Congressional appointment to the Military Academy. He reported to West Point in June 1946.

In 1950 he graduated 34th in his class of 669. On active duty, his first assignment was as a platoon leader, Company C, 62d Engineers, Far East Command, Korea. In June 1951 he was made company commander. In 1952 he became tactical officer, The Engieer Officer Candidate School, a position he held for 21 months. In Korea he earned a Bronze Star and a Meritorious Service Medal.

After his return from Korea in 1953, he married Nancy Magee of Berlin, Maryland. They had three children: John H. Pigman Jr., Melissa and Kristen.

In January 1954 Jack resigned his Regular Army commission to take over the management of a family business in Berlin, Maryland. Under his direction, this grew to be one of the major enterprises on Maryland's Eastern Shore. In Berlin, he supported many worthwhile civic ventures. His exceptional talent as a speaker made him much in demand as a master of ceremonies. He was a member of

Berlin's Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion and was at one time the president of Berlin's Lions Club. He was a director of The Peninsula Bank. In addition, during his years in the petroleum business he was very active in area dealer affairs. His experience and judgment were valued by customers and competitors alike. Many people called on him for advice and he obliged them all. He knew how things should work and how to fix them when they didn't perform properly.

Jack's love of the Army led him to join the Army Reserve in January 1954. A dedicated Reservist, he attended the Artillery and Missile School's Artillery Career Course; the Chemical Center and Schools' Chemical Officer Career Course (Reserve Component); and in 1973 he completed the Command and General Staff Officer Course, Non-Resident. In 1976 he graduated from the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks.

His ability to lead and inspire his men was evident in the assignments given to him by his superiors. From March 1955 to December 1970, he served in a succession of command and staff positions with the 319th Infantry, the 650th Field Artillery Battalion, 7/6th Field Artillery, 2010th Logistic Command, 489th Chemical Battalion, and finally, as commander of the 275th Supply and Service Battalion. In December 1970 he was made Assistant Chief of Staff of the 97th United States Army Reserve Command (ARCOM), headquartered at Fort Meade, Maryland. In December 1972 Jack became the ARCOM's G4; in May 1976, its Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Training. In September 1976 he was selected to be Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Reserve Affairs). In that position, he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and became the first Reserve Officer to serve at North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Brussels, as liaison. In September 1977 Jack returned to the 97th ARCOM as its new commanding general.

In 1972 Jack married Patricia Ann Boyce of New York City. Pat shared much of his Reserve travel schedule, including his stint in Brussels.

At his funeral service held in Ocean City, Maryland on 24 February 1978, the officiating chaplain summed up Jack's philosophy quite nicely: "IN 1954, I met a young lieutenant. He strode across the room briskly, put out his hand and said, 'Hello, I'm Jack Pigman.' A few months ago I met that same young man but this time he was my commanding general. Again he said, 'Hello, I'm Jack Pigman,' just as he had 24 years ago. There was no pretense, no special favors for him, just plain Jack Pigman."

Three days after his interment at West Point his friends and colleagues in the 97th ARCOM established a memorial fund at West Point to endow an annual award to the outstanding company in Jack's old regiment in the Corps of Cadets. The first John H. Pigman Award was presented at the June 1978 Awards Convocation.

Jack Pigman was a most impressive man. His vitality, wit and grasp of any situation and an almost immediate solution to any problem, marked him for a greatness cut short only by the tragedy of his death.

Many lives were enriched by knowing him. He was a man dedicated to his family and friends, his Alma Mater and his country. I will always cherish the wonderful years with him.

- his wife

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