

LT WILLIAM G. KING JR. USMC

The following are recollections of Bill King by fellow classmate at the Naval Prep School,
Bainbridge, Maryland, 1966-67
by LCPL James L. (Larry) Walker, USMC.

William G. (Bill) King and I became good friends while we were students at NAPS. We just "clicked" as buddies, as the saying goes. He was a Lance Corporal when we got there, I was a PFC. We both received promotions while at NAPS. He was easy to talk to, and I learned he hailed from Orlando, Florida, which town he loved very much. Bill was an easy going, and mostly soft-spoken fellow, something opposite of my more boisterous personality. We had good times and laughs at the school, even double-dating on one occasion. On page 94 of our "The Cruise, Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Seven" yearbook, Bill in his Dress Blues, and I in Dress Greens, with our good-looking dates from Johns Hopkins' School of Nursing in Baltimore, can be seen having a good time at the November 10, 1966 Marine Corps Birthday Ball, held at Marine Barracks, Annapolis. Hard to believe that was 51 years ago. We were both smitten with those pretty girls we asked to sit with and dance with us. They seemed to like us as well, and we asked if we could visit them in Baltimore, and they said yes. On one occasion, Bill and I went down to Johns Hopkins from Bainbridge to see those girls, whose names I've forgotten, and we had a good time seeing them, though my recollection is, since neither of us had any money, we just visited them in the sitting room area of the dorms they were in. I later went down by myself to see the girl I'd met at the ball. No romances developed for either of us, however, from those dates.

By winter of 1967, my grades had deteriorated because I hadn't studied as I should have, and in February, I was booted out of NAPS due to poor performance. Coincidentally, Bill was also released at the same time from NAPS, and both of us had been reassigned to Marine Corps Schools (as called at that time, now called Marine Corps Base), Quantico, Virginia. My recollection, though, is that Bill was not released for poor grades as I was; Bill was smarter than I was, and he studied harder. My remembrance of his release is, that he had convinced our superiors officers, he wanted to attend Warrant Officer Basic School at Quantico, get his commission, and then go to helicopter pilot training. Going to the Naval Academy, for him, would have taken too long to achieve his goal of flying helicopters in Viet Nam, which is what he strongly wanted to do. You will recall that Viet Nam had heated up significantly by 1967, with major combat operations having taken place since August 1965. That is how I remember our conversation as we rode together on the bus to Quantico. It was not long after we arrived at Quantico, both of us being reassigned to different units, that I learned Bill had been assigned to Warrant Officer Basic School, as he had wanted. Within a few months, perhaps 4 months or so, he had received his W.O. 1 Commission. By the fall of 1967 or early 1968, I learned that Bill was in helicopter training. I am not sure if he had already gotten his pilot's wings, or was still in training, at the time of his death, but he was certainly close to having achieved his goal of receiving those wings.

Tragically, sometime during the first or second week of April 1968, I read in the base newspaper at Quantico, that Bill and another friend of his, who I didn't know, were shot and murdered on the streets of Georgetown, D.C., and robbed by thugs. Bill's friend was actually with his fiancée, and Bill was with his date. Neither girl was harmed, according to the newspaper account. Being young and immature, I did not think of contacting his unit commander or Top Sergeant, to try to communicate with his parents. I wish today, these many years later, I had thought of doing that at the time. I would have liked to have told them what a fine Marine and gentleman, their son, Bill King, was. His loss to his family, the Marine Corps, and his country, was real and significant. Bill would have saved many American lives in Viet Nam, as those chopper pilots every day in that God-awful war. I remember fondly my ole Marine buddy, Bill King, every day.



Woodlawn Memorial Park, Gotha, Orange County, Florida.

(Note: perpetual flowers donated by NAPS '67 classmate and friend **LCPL James L. Walker, USMC.**)