

Laslie, Joseph Taylor (Joe), 3rd Platoon

23 Dec 1944 - 26 May 1968

Attapulgus Methodist Church Cemetery, GA



Joseph Taylor Laslie, jr was born in Bainbridge, Georgia December 23, 1944 on his youngest sister, Harriet's 4th birthday. He grew up on the Georgia-Florida line where his family's shade tobacco farm, Oakdale Plantation, was located. Along with his parents, Joe had six older sisters, and two brothers, one older and one younger. His home was near the small town of Attapulgus, Georgia. He attended elementary school in Attapulgus and attended junior high and high school at Gadsden County High School, Quincy, Florida. Following high school, Joe attended South Georgia College where he was vice president of the student body, manager of the softball team and treasurer of the Circle K Club. He transferred to the University of Georgia (UGA) from which he graduated in 1967 with a BBA (bachelor's degree in business administration). While at UGA he was a member the Young Republicans Club and the Sigma Chi fraternity, in which he was very active.

Joe joined the Marine Corp through the Platoon Leaders Class program. At The Basic School he was in the 3rd platoon, A company, class 1-68 starting in July 1967 and completing in November. He was known as bighearted and fun-loving, but also, when appropriate able to be completely serious and focused in an instant. He had a compelling grin and a thunderous laugh that was also infectious. At TBS he took care of his own responsibilities and was always ready to help others. Once after an all day field exercise, he skipped dinner to go back into the woods to help a friend try to find a piece of gear he had lost. He was very proud of his home state and dedicated to his country.

After TBS, Joe was sent to Camp Lejeune, NC for training in Motor Transport and then to Viet Nam arriving in country on March 9, 1968. He was attached to 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines (2/4) as a Motor Transport officer until the middle of May. The Tet Offensive had significantly reduced the number officers in 2/4, and throughout April 2/4 was involved in many bitter clashes near Dong Ha and along the Cua Viet River. Starting on April 30 and ending around May 3, 1968, 2/4 was engaged in the fierce Battle of Dai Do in defense of Dong Ha. The battle was against a regiment of NVA and 2/4 suffered 80 dead and 256 that were wounded and evacuated.

Most of the Platoon Leaders in E Company (E/2/4) were casualties which resulted in Joe being transferred from the battalion motor transportation attachment to E/2/4 as a Platoon Leader of the 2nd platoon. In late May, some NVA were observed near a village called Nhi Ha (2), and Joe was assigned to lead a less than platoon sized patrol through the Nhi Ha (2) village. There the NVA sprang an ambush on the platoons as they encountered a battalion of the 320th NVA Regiment. On May 25, 1968, 2ndLt Joe

Laslie, in the point element at the head of the patrol, was killed almost immediately. The ensuing battle required 3 companies with artillery support to secure the area and beat back the NVA advance.

He was awarded the Purple Heart and was buried June 7, 1968, in the Laslie family plot behind the Methodist Church in Attapulgus, Georgia. Joe was survived by his parents, Annie Berry and Joseph Taylor Laslie and his six sisters and two brothers.

In 2010, Joe was honored by his Sigma Chi Fraternity Brothers from the University of Georgia. His family was presented with a bronze of a Marine kneeling at the Wall with one hand on his helmet and the other on the Wall with Joe's name inscribed, along with the quotation, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." This bronze was then presented to his fraternity and is to forever remain at the Sigma Chi Fraternity House in Athens, Georgia as a reminder of the sacrifice Joe made as the only fraternity brother to lose his life in Viet Nam.

USMC Resume:

The Basic School Class 1-68 Alpha Company, 3rd Platoon, Jun-Nov 1967 (roommate – Mike McClung)
Camp Lejeune, NC: Motor Transport Course

Vietnam: 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines (2/4) Bn Motor Transport Officer, 9 Mar – mid May 1968
E/2/4 2nd Platoon Leader, mid to 26 May 1968.

Personal Reflections about Joe Laslie:

Recollections by Chuck Steele: "One Sunday morning I was going through the TBS mess line for a leisurely breakfast. I was in front of Joe Laslie. He was from Georgia and I was from southern California. I watched him spoon a big blob of white glop on his plate and I asked him why he was putting Cream-of-Wheat cereal on the plate with his to-order eggs. He took my ignorance in stride and proceeded to expound on the culinary merits of grits. He advised me to try some and to add a little butter and salt and pepper. The knowledge served me well when I went on to flight school in Pensacola and the incident was cemented in my memory when those of us in flight school learned of his death. An observation on how the Corps throws strangers together from different parts of the country and backgrounds."