

Spindler, John Gates (John), 5th Platoon

1 February 1946 - 21 April 1968

Courts of the Missing, MIA Memorial, HI

Memorial stone placed in Resurrection Cemetery, Affton MO.



John Gates Spindler was born 1 February 1946 in St. Louis, MO to Phillip Spindler and Leona Gates. He attended St. Cecilia's Grade school 1950-1959, St. Louis University High School 1959-1963, and Washington University 1963-1967 where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He was a member of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity.

John enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserve through the Platoon Leaders/ Class (PLC) program on 14 Jan 1966. He spent 13 June through 20 August 1966 as a member of 3rd Platoon, C Company, Officer Candidates' School. John was offered and agreed to accept a regular commission upon graduation. On Sunday, 4 June 1967, John was commissioned that evening in Graham Chapel in a joint ceremony with two other Marine Lieutenants, along with five Army and five Air Force Lieutenants from the University ROTC units.

After six days of leave and two days of travel, he reported to The Basic School (TBS), Quantico Virginia on 13 June 1967. Since he was assigned to a class that would not start until 3 July, he was given duties in the TBS headquarters for the three weeks until the class convened. On 3 July 1967, Lt Spindler became part of 5th Platoon, A Company, Basic Officers' Class #1-68. Late in the course, Lt Spindler received his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) assignment of 0301, Basic Infantry Officer and orders to report to Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Western Pacific Ground Forces following graduation. The class graduated on 22 November 1967.

By 31 December 1967, he was flying to Okinawa. After five days, 2nd Lt. Spindler was on a flight to South Vietnam, arriving in Danang on 7 January 1968. His ultimate assignment was to G Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment (G/2/3) which was already engaged in "Operations in Defense of Danang." He was assigned to be the 2nd Platoon Leader. On 6 February 1968, 2nd Lt. Spindler received fragmentation wounds to his right arm, but was not seriously hurt and was treated at the Battalion Aid Station and returned to duty. This would earn his first Purple Heart Medal.

Operation Scotland II commenced on 16 April 1968 as Marines at Khe Sanh broke the siege and started attacking enemy units still in the area. Lt. Spindler's platoon was deployed to a blocking position on top of Hill 691. Combined with search and destroy missions by the other elements of the battalion, this action was designed to support fully securing Route 9 and resupply to Khe Sanh Combat Base. Enemy

contact was relatively light, though Lt. Spindler did receive a minor fragmentation wound to the right side of his neck on 18 April, earning a second Purple Heart Medal.

On the morning of 21 April 1968, having had no more significant contact, 2nd Platoon was ordered to stage all personnel and ammunition for helicopter pickup. By sometime after 0800, Lt. Spindler was standing at the helicopter landing area. At that instant, two incoming rounds impact and killed Lt Spindler. His body was never found. A memorial service was held at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and a memorial stone placed in Resurrection Cemetery in Affton MO.

USMC Resume:

The Basic School Class 1-68 Alpha Company, 5th Platoon, Jun-Nov 1967

Vietnam: G Company, 2nd Bn, 3rd Marine Regiment (G/2/3) 7 Jan – 21 Apr 1968.

Personal Reflections about John Spindler:

From Courtney, 17 April 2015: My recollection is that we never really called John by his first name, but always called him Spindler. He was outgoing, friendly, mischievous and always had that half crazed Spindler grin. One hot dusty day in July or August, Bruce Wiggins was acting platoon leader, walking in the middle of the dirt road while the rest of us struggled on the sides at route step. Suddenly, Spindler burst from the ranks and rushed up behind Wiggins, falling in at perfect Marx Brothers step behind him for a dozen paces before Wiggins noticed him, or noticed the grins and laughter around him. Then Spindler scampered back to his place having once again given us the gift of much needed levity. The greatest tragedy of war is the taking of young men of free spirit so full of life. God bless you, John. You always made us smile.