



Dale Rudolf Nelson

April 26, 1946 - May 28, 2025

"I recognize three life-changing events that have made the most significant impacts in my life. In chronological order... my attendance and graduation from USMA with the Class of 1968 and my privilege to serve the nation both on active duty and in a civilian capacity for almost four decades... my meeting and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in 1970 and His patience with me in all the years since... [and] the blessing of meeting and marrying of my bride Huong... my greatest friend, my lover, mother of my two wonderful children, and my most understanding supporter in all that we have done together."

Dale Rudolf was born on April 26, 1946, to Leslie Ralph and Helen Marie Nelson in Lockport, New York. Leslie was a general foreman at Harrison Radiator Division, GMC and a Marine Corp veteran who had served in the South Pacific during WWII. Helen was a loving housewife and mother who nursed Dale through a challenging childhood marked by illness. His frequent and often extended absence from North Park School (Grades 1-6) made it difficult to keep up with the curriculum or his classmates prompting concern from relatives and teachers about future prospects. Being in a position

of disadvantage motivated Dale to work hard and through long hours. Combined with 'God's grace' and mom's loving care, Dale's health improved and so did his grades. While attending Lockport High School, Dale joined the Varsity Club, wrestled, ran track, and played tennis. His drive helped him to excel into positions such as team captain of the Varsity Wrestling Team ('63-64) and President of the LSHS Chapter of the National Honor Society. When Dale graduated in 1964, he ranked first in his class. Unlike many graduates, Dale knew what he wanted to do with his life. Inspired by his father Leslie and uncle, George Hynes', service in the Marine Corp as well as the book "God is My Co-Pilot" by Robert L. Scott, Dale knew he wanted to become a 'serviceman'. That same year, with the support of his 9th grade English teacher, Sally Glover, Dale was selected by Congressman William E. Miller of Lockport for an appointment with a full scholarship to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. Cadet Nelson began his formal training in the military arts and leadership at the U.S.M.A. on July 01, 1964, assigned to Company 'E' 2nd Regiment (E2). There he would also learn discipline, most often the hard way, alongside his classmates. "Dale, a West Pointer by birth was known for his love of wrestling and his distaste of academics. Never defeated by the system, he will be remembered for 'Operation Pizza' and other infamous schemes." On June 05, 1968, Dale graduated with a Bachelor of Science and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant (2LT) in the U.S. Army Infantry.

Following graduation, 2LT Nelson continued his training at Fort Benning, GA by attending and completing the Infantry Officer Basic, Airborne, Jumpmaster, and Ranger courses. He was then assigned to Ft. Bragg, N.C. as Platoon leader of Company 'B', 3rd Battalion 504th Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division.

On June 05, 1969, Dale was promoted to 1st Lieutenant (1LT) before heading to Southeast Asia for his first of two combats tours. During his first tour, 1LT Nelson was assigned Rifle Platoon leader, Company 'B', 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 5th Infantry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), S-4 (Supply) and S-3 (Air). At the end of the year Dale was wounded by shrapnel. During recovery he received a Purple Heart, two Bronze Stars for heroism, and the Silver Star. He finished his first tour in Vietnam with the 27th Maintenance Battalion (Airmobile), 1st Cav Division (Airmobile), Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam (R.V.N.).

In 1970, Dale began a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Dale's faith and witness encouraged many others to make their own decisions to follow Christ, including his parents, future wife, and their children. Later that year on June 05, 1LT Nelson received a promotion to Captain (CPT) and was assigned Company Commander of Company 'C', 1st Airborne Battalion, 509th Mechanized Infantry, 8th Infantry Division at Mainz, West Germany. He completed MATA Cords course (1971) before reassignment to Vietnam for his second tour. CPT Nelson served at Tonson Nu (1971) and then Quang

Tri (1972), Vietnam as Watch Officer, Headquarters Staff, Iaer Brigade Deputy Staff advisor, Airborne

Division Assistance Team, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).

In 1972, Dale met his future wife, Tran Thi Huong in Saigon. He returned stateside to Ft.

Benning, GA and began the process for Huong to immigrate to the U.S. On January 14, 1973, they

married in Lockport, NY at his 9th grade English teacher, John Koplas', home.

The newlyweds enjoyed a

brief honeymoon at Niagara Falls and Canada before heading to Ft. Benning.

There CPT Nelson

completed the Infantry Officer Advanced and Basic Instructor Training courses before being assigned

Company Commander of Company 'B', (Airborne/Ranger), 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry, the School Brigade

and serving as an Operations Officer and Instructor at the Tactics Department, U.S. Army Infantry

School. The Nelson family expanded with the arrival of their first child

Christine Helen on April 02,

1974. In September, CPT Nelson flew to England to attend the UK Ministry of Defense Advanced course.

When Dale returned, he resumed instructing at the Infantry School. In March 1976, CPT Nelson became

certified as a Senior Parachutist. At the end of that year, December 30, 1976, the Nelson's second child

Daniel Leslie was born. During the following year, on April 8, 1977, Dale completed the Law of War

Instructor Course of the Judge Advocate Generals School in Virginia. He next received orders overseas to

serve as Assistant G-3 of the 3rd Infantry Division in Wurzburg, Germany until

the end of 1978. In January of 1979, CPT Nelson served as S-3 (Operations), 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division in Aschaffenburg, Germany and was promoted to Major (MAJ) on April 01, 1979. On February 29, 1980, Dale's father, Leslie, suffered a heart attack. The Nelson family returned briefly stateside to New York to attend the funeral. Later that year, Dale received orders to report to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas to attend the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College. At commencement, MAJ Nelson was awarded a Master of Military Art and Science Degree with the Centennial Class of 1981, and was also recognized as the year's Distinguished Graduate receiving the General George C. Marshall Award. After graduation and a short vacation, Dale reported to Washington D.C. assigned as a Staff Officer, War Plans Division, Officer of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, at the Pentagon. While there, Dale and Huong invited Dale's mother, Helen, to move in and join the family. In 1983, the Nelson's returned to Europe where MAJ Nelson was selected to command 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry, 56th Field Artillery Brigade (Pershing) in Neu Ulm, Germany. Dale was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) on July 01, 1984, serving as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations) 3rd Infantry Division in Wurzburg, West Germany from 1985-1987 before once again returning stateside. From 1987-1989, LTC Nelson attended the U.S. Naval War College, first as a student and later as Senior Army Research Fellow graduating with a Master of Art Degree in

National Security and Strategic

Studies. Dale was promoted to Colonel (COL) on June 01, 1989, and subsequently assigned command of

3rd Basic Combat Training (BCT) Brigade, US Army Training Center at Ft. Dix N.J. During Operation Desert Shield, hundreds of Kuwaitis volunteers (Task Force Desert Owl) were taught basic military and specialty skills at Ft. Dix to serve and support U.S. forces efforts to liberate their country. In 1991, Dale worked to deactivate the 35-year-old training brigade. COL Nelson next served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations), III Corps, at Ft. Hood, TX. Dale's mom, Helen, passed away at the end of 1991, and was returned to Lockport, NY to be buried alongside Leslie. In 1992, Christine graduated high school and left

the nest to attend Roanoke College in Virginia. On April 01, 1994, COL Nelson was promoted to Brigadier

General (BG). A year later he completed the Capstone General and Flag Officer Course followed by

assignment to Washington D.C. as Deputy Director, Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate, Office of the

Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, US Army, Pentagon. Son, Daniel, graduated high

school in 1994 and was accepted to attend George Mason University in Virginia. In 1995, BG Nelson

received orders to serve as Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) to the 24th Infantry Mechanized

at Ft. Stewart, Georgia. While stationed there, BG Nelson traveled to Egypt to participate in the National

Training Center rotation - Operation Bright Star (1995) and then the Ultimate Resolve Exercise with

Kuwaiti armed forces (1996). In 1997, Dale was assigned Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations

(Maneuver), U.S. Army FORSCOM, at Ft. McPherson, GA. During the Gulf Crisis and Operation Desert Thunder in 1998, Dale deployed to the Combined Joint Task Force in Kuwait. On May 01, 1999, Dale retired from active federal service after having served 30 years 10 months 26 days. His retirement ceremony was held at Ft. McPherson three days earlier. After retiring from the U.S. Army, Dale transitioned to serving his country in a civilian capacity as the Director of Army Force Programs for Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) in their Atlanta Office from 1999-2007. His SAIC G3/5/7 Contractor Support Team provided support to FORSCOM, the National Training Center, and the US Army by contributing resolutions to the myriad of operational issues and challenges related to the Global War on Terrorism. During the Nelson's transition to civilian life, Dale and Huang took possession of a custom home they designed and had built south of Atlanta in Georgia. They sought a new church home in their new locale and found more time to spend with each other and their children. On July 11, 2000, Rebekah Allcott Kelly, Dale's first grandchild was born to their daughter Christine and her husband Whitwell Kelly followed by grandchild number two, Thomas Wirsing Kelly, on June 11, 2003. Retirement also afforded Dale and Huang more time and opportunities to volunteer at Ft. McPherson & Ft. Gillem (1999-2011), Jonesboro United Methodist Church, and for local youth programs such as the Boy Scouts of America, ROTC, and JROTC. Dale was also able to reconnect with many of his

classmates from the U.S.M.A. Class of '68 and other soldiers he served with throughout his military career. After retiring from SAIC, Dale suffered a stroke that later led to a determination of Dementia Alzheimer's. Dale struggled against Alzheimer's for over 10 years under the loving care of Huong at their home outside of Atlanta before passing on May 28, 2025.

BG(R) Dale Nelson was a West Pointer. He was an Infantryman and an Airborne/Ranger. Dale was a Dog-faced Soldier (3rd INF Division), a Cottonbaler (1st Battalion 7th INF Regiment), a Warrior (2nd Battalion 4th INF Regiment), and a Blue Spader (26th INF Regiment). He was a student and an instructor, a soldier and a commander.

Among BG(R) Dale Nelson's decorations are: the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star Medal, the Legion of Merit Medal (6th), the Soldier's Medal, the Bronze Star Medal with Combat Distinguished "V" (2nd), Bronze Star Medal, Purple Hearts (2nd), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (2nd), the Air Medal, the Joint Services Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal (4th), Valorous Unit Award, the National Defense Service Medal (2nd), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal-Five Bronze Services Stars, the Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbons (3rd), the Vietnam Commendation Badge, Expert Marksmanship Badge with Pistol Bar, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Expert Infantryman badge, the Senior Parachutist Badge, the Ranger Tab, Army Staff Identification Badge, Overseas Bar (4th), and the General Staff

Identification Badge.

Dale Nelson was also a good son, a devoted husband, a provider for his family, a role model for his children and grandchildren, a dependable friend, and a servant and witness to his Lord and Savior.

He is survived by his wife, Huong; daughter, Christine (husband Whitwell Kelly); son, Daniel; grandchildren, Rebekah and Thomas; his cousins, Terry Phalert and Sheryl Carr.

A funeral service will be held at 2PM on Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at Jonesboro First United Methodist Church. The family will accept friends one hour prior to the service. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date with Full Military Honors.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington Cemetery
Arlington, VA 22211

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 4. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Jonesboro First United Methodist Church
142 South Main Street
Jonesboro, GA 30236

Funeral Service

JUN 4. 2:00 PM (ET)

Jonesboro First United Methodist Church
142 South Main Street
Jonesboro, GA 30236

Tribute Wall



“ 97 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Ford Stewart Funeral Home - June 03, 2025 at 01:41 PM