

The Long Gray Line

Based on the Best Selling Book
By Pulitzer Prize Winner Rick Atkinson

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The Long Gray Line

We follow eight incredible men of the West Point Class of 1966 to present day. These are real men, and a true story ... their story.

As each was shaped by the Long Gray Line, their blood, sweat and tears were a part of a journey that made history. Their stories are woven into a fabric of time during which the United States Army saw its darkest hours leading to years of decline ... only to rise again to a level of military strength that restored its pride and glory at the close of the 20th century.

We can say that these men were extraordinary men ... but they were no less than all of those who choose to walk *The Long Gray Line*.

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THE LONG GRAY LINE

An Introduction to the Project ...

The Long Gray Line ... written by Rick Atkinson, who won the coveted Pulitzer Prize for this best-selling work of history ... is now being developed as a seven-part special event series by Tri-Laurel Productions.

This is a true story about the men who graduated from West Point in the Class of 1966, and the part they have – and are - playing in America’s history. The following synopsis of *The Long Gray Line* was written by Scott Barry --- a 1974 West Point graduate, and a retired Army officer and Airborne/Ranger.

The Long Gray Line is an epic special that will follow a group of young men from middle-America into West Point, an institution of almost mythic proportion, where we join them on their journey as they prepare for war. The story not only follows the lives, loves, triumphs, and sacrifices of these men who become members of The Long Gray Line, but it is, in effect, a history of the United States military from the dark days in Vietnam to its rebirth as the greatest military power in history. More officers from this graduating class lost their lives during the Vietnam war than any other time in West Point’s 200 years. Several went on to make history, in the military and in civilian life, through the end of the 20th century.

No other television event in history has told a tale like *The Long Gray Line*, nor revealed the inner-workings of West Point as this one will do. In a precedent setting event, West Point has agreed to allow all of its facilities to be utilized in shooting this production. Similar support has also been secured from the Department of the Army and the Pentagon. Other location shooting will take place in New York, Georgia, Florida, Germany, France, and Hawaii – where cooperation has been offered to re-create the incredible Vietnam segments.

The response from prominent West Point alumni has been overwhelming. Tri-Laurel has secured – with more to come - for the project’s Board of Advisors Dr. Buzz Aldrin, General Wesley K. Clark (NATO Commander), LTG Harold G. Moore (*We Were Soldiers*), and

United States Ambassador to the Vatican, James Nicholson – and of course, the unconditional support of Class of 1966.

When told of the upcoming production, General Alexander Haig, former Secretary of State, remarked: “The timing couldn’t be better with this being the year of West Point’s Bicentennial and the conflicts in which we’re engaged to tell the human story behind the U.S. Military Academy’s credo of ‘Duty, Honor, Country.’”

The need to tell this story is more important today than ever before. For the first time since World War II, the audience wants to know and understand those who are combat trained and willing to defend America’s freedom. For the first time in decades patriotism is a shared, continual experience. Through *The Long Gray Line*, the audience will gain an awareness that can do nothing but bring us closer together on a national level.

“The Long Gray Line reveals the true heart and soul of the military.” Bob Woodward

“The Long Gray Line is a tremendously impressive work ... it is almost unbelievable that the characters ended up in the middle of so much of the drama of our recent history.”

James Farrow, Author, *More Like Us*

THE LONG GRAY LINE

Main Characters

The following are our (six) flawed heroes of the West Point Class of 1966. These were the cream of the crop – but like all young men of 18 and 19, they were still waiting to be formed into the men they would become. West Point more than gave them that opportunity. When they graduate as officers in a society filled with turmoil, we have already come to know each man as he establishes his character, his values, his virtues, and his weaknesses. Filled with the righteousness of youth - and not yet consciously aware of whom they really are - the future is about to test them, their dreams, their realities.

JACK WHEELER

Attending high school in Arlington Virginia, Jack was an outstanding student, proficient in multiple languages, and excelled in skiing and sailing ... however, he had no clear definition of what he wanted to be. Ultimately, the fates would prove that - because of his choice of attending West Point over Yale - he would never fully understand his destiny.

Jack comes from a long list of military men on his father's side dating back to the Mexican-American War – and of course, his father wanted him to attend West Point as he had. His mother, who knew Jack better than he knew himself, wanted him to “follow his star.” Knowing that the military could never provide the options in life that Jack needed, she begged him to go to Yale. He felt compelled to respect his father's wishes to attend his alma mater, where self-doubt plagued him from the first month of his West Point career.

West Point academics were challenging, but basically easy for him --- while his charm and casual good looks gave him a chance to glide through whatever situation he found himself in. And there was the problem: never fully committing himself to the military - and with the quiet arrogance of the gifted - Jack never felt worthy.

Throughout his life, Jack maintained a philosophy that he, and those like him, are on earth to achieve great things for humanity. This conflicted with his role as a combat leader. He often saw things in the big picture of good versus evil, the virtues of established religions, and the role of man in helping the downtrodden. Although his classmates enjoyed his company – as he did theirs – with weighty subjects ruling his outlook, it was easy for him to alienate those friends around him who struggled with the simple mundane challenges of life.

Jack graduated in the top five percent of his class – becoming a West Point “Star Man.” Whereas his strength was intellectual, his weakness was military aptitude – or more accurately, attitude. Upon graduation, he was considering shunning the combat arms branches (infantry, armor, artillery) for the field of medicine. Once again, he reinforced an early pattern that would never produce personal satisfaction. To maintain the militaristic family tradition ... he chose artillery.

GEORGE CROCKER

As an All-American football player from Russellville, Arkansas, George made his mark in high school as a top athlete. Athletic and handsome – and even breaking his nose five times didn't seem to do too much damage – George struggled with academics, and worked hard for the grades he received.

He knew from an early age that he wanted to attend the United States Military Academy – and why. Upon entering West Point his primary goal, and ultimately, his never-ending focus, was to emerge as a combat commander. Unfortunately, scholastics were almost his Waterloo – nearly flunking out in his junior year. However, it was from this experience that George learned one of his greatest lessons regarding leadership. He was given a chance to re-take his electrical engineering final - and after passing, he mention to the prof that he felt that this course would do him no good in leading men into combat. His professor made two points that George never forgot throughout his long military career. First, he pointed out that the unconditional necessity of sticking to something even if you see failure looming on the horizon. Second, he told George that electricity was like leadership – that one can study what it does, but that it can't truly be explained, only experienced.

When it comes to military leadership, George is the poster-boy for West Point's creed, "Duty, Honor, Country." During his training, and later in war, he commands with complete concern for the welfare of his men and the unqualified success of their mission. While other graduates will aspire to achieve greatness in various fields – and some within the public eye – George is content to simply lead men into harms way for the good of the national interest, and then to bring them safely home. He is the soldier's soldier with the respect of all who have the good fortune to meet him.

George also has the good fortune to meet a gorgeous cheerleader from the University of Arkansas with whom he will fall in love and marry. Vonda understands George, and, equally important, the life she has committed to with him. She knows that their marriage is special, and his loyalty unquestionable. But, she also knows that he has chosen his career path wisely, with no ego involved. He loves the company of men with whom he shares common values – and of experiencing with them the uncommon demands of war.

George is basically a simple man – but the quintessential reflection of a man who becomes a cadet at West Point. He is a "regular young American man" who – after the most demanding of training - is thrust into extraordinary circumstances under the most dangerous of historical combat situations. George thrives to a level of excellence that is expected of all United States Military Academy graduates at a time when the fate of the nation is in the balance. George Crocker is a true warrior --- and the rock in our special story.

TOM CARHART

A classic overachiever from Arlington, Virginia, Tom is also a military brat and a second-generation West Pointer - although, in his self-deprecating style, he liked to brag that he is the “grandson of a farmer and a greengrocer.” His father is actually an Air Force Colonel, causing Tom to travel extensively during his youth. His extended residency in France was a great advantage in his early development – enabling him to become fluent in the French language, and a Francophile culturally.

Like many entering West Point, Tom is an accomplished athlete and an excellent student. His parents have always demanded his best efforts – and he is no less demanding on himself. Upon arriving at West Point, Tom now expects to be the best among this crème-of-the-crop. When he falls short, his frustration is pronounced.

His ability to attract bad luck is legendary throughout his West Point years – including excessive demerits, and a life threatening car accident in his senior year that almost causes him to not graduate. One thing that keeps him sane during the disappointments is Tom’s pronounced sense of humor and capacity for mischievousness and chicanery. His kidnapping of the Naval Academy’s mascot is the stuff of legend – and the sort of bravado that draws his friends to him.

His luck follows him after graduation and throughout his life both in the military and out: illnesses, combat wounds, bad romantic relationships, and eventually, public denunciations – spurred on by fellow classmate Jack Wheeler - over the Vietnam War Memorial.

At times, Tom’s life sounds like a sad country/western song. Yet, Tom continually sets himself apart from the rest by his steadfast belief in himself and his dogged determination – two solid attributes which never fail to carry him on through bad times and good. His West Point years trained him well. He makes no excuses for either his bad luck or his bad decisions --- and is the first to take responsibility for his own actions, be they successes or failures.

As a soldier, he again has more than his share of bad luck and misfortune – often brought on by his own actions and his determination to be the “one who knows best” in all situations. But, he proves himself a warrior with few peers, whether it be leading men into assigned combat situations, or acting deep behind enemy lines in covert operations.

Among the variety of characters that make up the exemplary list of West Point’s Class of ’66, Tom is unquestionably one of the most colorful.

RICHARD “BUCK” THOMPSON

Growing up in Atchison, Kansas, a small river-and-railroad town on the muddy Missouri, Buck was one of six children in a close-knit family. His father owned Thompson’s Restaurant, the kind of place with a big banquet room for local weddings and a sign outside that announced: “Rotary Meets Tuesday Noon.”

Thriving on the country life, Buck grew big and strong with a barrel chest that served him well. He played football throughout high school becoming All-State --- in addition to placing second in the state of Kansas in discus and shot-put.

Initially, Buck rejected thirty full scholarships, including West Point and Annapolis, to attend the University of Kansas on a football scholarship. He joined Sigma Chi fraternity, and became a legend at practical jokes and wild pranks. Unfortunately, this wore out his welcome at the U of K. He transferred to St. Benedict’s College where he funneled his football passion into the military by joining the Army Reserves --- winning his paratrooper wings, earning straight A’s, and accepting an appointment to West Point for the class of 1966.

Buck’s continued sense of humor and insouciance as a Plebe at the Military Academy brought him plenty of unwanted attention from upperclassmen. Once again, Buck was in route to becoming a legend. By the end of his second semester, he would achieve what few cadets could do in four years – he became a “Century Man” by walking over 100 hours of punishment tours on “The Area.” His classmates adored him. The easiest way to convene a group of cadets together was to ask, “Did you hear what Buck just did?”

With Buck’s irreverence and casualness amidst a bastion of discipline and seriousness, he represented the rebel within each of them. He was their beloved outlaw. Buck Thompson was a legend – truly – in his own time.

ART BONIFAS

Growing up in Bellevue, Nebraska, Art was about as Midwestern low-key as possible. His father was a stern disciplinarian and worked in the food brokerage business – traveling extensively through middle-America. His mom provided a softer side, driving her son to the Omaha YMCA for swim meets after school, and encouraging him to read, read, read.

By the time Art reached high school, he was enrolled in Creighton Prep, a Jesuit School, and then onto Creighton University. There was no doubt in his father's mind that Art would one day join him in the business, but Art had other ideas. He wanted out --- out to see the world, out of Nebraska, out of the Midwest, and definitely, out from under his father's jurisdiction. He got his wish when he obtained an appointment to West Point after one year at the University.

Suddenly, thrust into the bustling East Coast and the Military Academy, Art found a new life – and one he adapted to happily. At West Point he excelled academically, and he used his swimming abilities to play water polo for four years. On weekends, he would savor the bright lights of New York, it's theatres and restaurants. It was there that he met Marcia McGuire, the girl who would be the love of his life.

Art was low-keyed, but he was also disciplined, successful, and engaging. And, as destiny provides a place in history for certain individuals, Art would also become the focal point of the world's attention not quite a decade after graduating from West Point.

THOMAS HAYES IV

Short, but powerful, with arresting eyes and an open face, Thomas Hayes had a West Point lineage second to none.

His grandfather and father were both Major Generals who had made outstanding contributions to the security and defense of our nation. With general's stars in his future seemingly a certainty, Tommy attended Duke University for one year before obtaining his appointment to West Point. He faced his future with certainty and joy that this is where he was meant to be. He not only became a Star Man, he was also bright enough to be tutoring upperclassmen in mathematics.

Brimming with self-confidence, Tommy starred on the soccer team for Army, skied, spoke Russian, and was a lead singer in both the Cadet Chapel Choir and Cadet Glee Club. Most important, among his peers, he was respected and admired for his brilliance, his warmth, his leadership as a Cadet Captain --- and always, for his friendship.

His best friend, Jack Wheeler, described Tommy as "A Prince." No one dissented from that praise – which sadly gave credence to the adage: "The good die young."

Supporting Players in the Class of '66's History

MARK MOSLEY

As brainy in the classroom as George Crocker was not, this Floridian was also a fun-loving trouble seeker.

MATT HARRISON

Matt is also an Army brat who never expected West Point to be as rough as it was. He was drawn to a life of public service that began when he was elected student council president in his Virginia high school. This drive would come to define his life.

CHAPLIN JAMES FORD

Chaplain Ford was a man of the cross among men of the sword. He was the son and grandson of Lutheran ministers who had settled in the Midwest among others of Swedish descent. Growing up in Minnesota, he was a ski champion. Although he loved politics, he chose the profession of his father – and every cadet at West Point was better for it.

When an opening became available for assistant chaplain at West Point, he left Ivanhoe, Minnesota to claim the job over forty other applicants. He was intrigued by the tradition of the Military Academy, but after arriving, he learned to adore the cadets most of all. His open sense of humor and affection for the young men won him high admiration from the Corps. Furthermore, West Point's emphasis on athletics and physical prowess gave him additional cachet among the cadets due to his ski championship background.

But it was his unwavering support for the individual cadet against the powers of the Academy that won him kudos which would last a lifetime. He was a special friend to whom any cadet, from Plebe to First Captain, could approach and talk openly. This rapport would endure beyond graduation and into the jungle of Vietnam or onto any battlefield in which these officers would find themselves in the future.

After his years at West Point, James Ford became the Chaplain to the Congress of the United States. Although he passed away in 2001, his memory lives strong in the memories of all whose lives he touched.

Although each man entered West Point in the year of 1962 with high hopes, and dreams of great achievements – each found in themselves colors and textures which didn't always provide a straight path to an expected destiny. Perhaps this is the story of all men – except that the Class of 66 were ordinary men with exceptional talents called upon to be better than the rest. No matter how much, or how little, potential they had upon entering, some could, and some could not achieve the greatness that West Point expected – but none went quietly into the good night. This is their story – their struggles, their successes, and their failures, played out against a tapestry of turbulent and changing times.

the Long Gray Line

A Synopsis of a Multi-Part Television Special
Written by Scott Barry

PART I & II The West Point Years (Opening Two Hours)

*In this multi-part special, the **first two segments** follow our idealistic young men as they take their journey through the four years of education and military training at West Point.*

Their freshman year ---Plebe Year --- is as demanding as anything they will ever undergo during the next four years.

The first eight weeks of this year, known as Beat Barracks, is a living hell ... and we see it all. The training is ferocious and nonstop ... the brain feels like it's going to explode while the body feels like it's ready to collapse. However, it's during these trying times that the lifetime bonds are formed.

As the academic year begins, Tom's quest to become the perfect cadet hits a snag, and his long string of bad luck begins. Buck struggles to keep from being kicked out for disciplinary reasons while never relinquishing his fighting spirit. George is fighting for his cadet life against the academic department. Jack, whose mother's parting words were, "go find your star, Jack," is always searching for the big picture and his place within it. Art is slowly shedding his mid-western naivete in his exploration of the larger world. And Tommy, is always a Prince ... while Mark and Matt find themselves in the top 15% of their class.

By the time they start their Yearling (sophomore) year at Camp Buckner, the military training is beginning to take hold. The traits they will demonstrate in combat after graduation are becoming apparent. Our former high school wonders are turning into warriors.

Over the next 18 months, in a rite of passage elevating them true manhood, most of our cadets find "that love" which inextricably turns a man around forever. What they discover about themselves, and the women they love, becomes as much a part of the soldier as his military training:

- Art and Brooklyn-beauty MARCIA come together on a blind date in New York City.
- Jack falls for an honest-to-god ballerina named GINNY.
- Buck overcomes his own ineptitude with the fairer sex with FRAN, a student at adjacent Ladycliff College.
- George wins the game when he finds VONDA, a former University of Arkansas cheerleader, on summer leave.

- And Tom loses his heart to MELISSA, the angelic daughter of an admiral at a Christmas party in Washington, D.C.

As our unknown heroes enter their Firstie (senior) year at West Point, Tom concocts a plan to leave their mark on West Point's history in a way few have done before. In a daring midnight commando raid, Tom, Jack, George, Buck and Mark succeed brilliantly in "goat-napping the Navy mascot, Billy ... only to be caught several days later after a joint FBI-Military Police investigation. The punishment turns out to be nothing more than a slap on the wrist, and our commandos turn out to be the pride of the Corps. They provide a well needed boost in the nick of time: Navy, considered the overwhelming favorite with Heisman winning quarterback Roger Staubach, was upset by Army in a 7-to-7 tie.

After the holidays, with graduation only months away, it's time to get serious about the options ahead ... choosing the branch and assignment where each will begin their military careers. As four men choose infantry, and volunteer for Vietnam after they complete their Ranger training, Jack questions the sanity of their rushing into combat so quickly. With most however, their gung-ho attitude of "marching to the sound of the guns" is matched only by their belief in their own immortality ... war's greatest asset.

Leading up to graduation, an annual ritual for the senior class every spring is to pick their new car ... and the overwhelming choice for the Class of '66 is the Chevy Corvette. Within hours of possession, a parade of the shiny, new sports cars hit the rain-slicked road. Arrogance, foolishness, and testosterone end in dire results when Tom is badly injured in a car wreck that leaves him in a coma.

Although months of painful recuperation lay ahead, Tom manages to regain consciousness in time to graduate with his class on a sun filled day in June of 1966. Vice President HUBERT HUMPHREY makes the commencement address ... but it's Tom who gets the biggest applause when he limps up to the stage on crutches to accept his diploma. WESLEY CLARK, who decades later will become Chief of NATO, is first in their class with Tommy, Mark, and Jack not far behind. Of the group, Matt and George balance the spectrum positioning themselves near the bottom of the class.

Pride swells, and class rank fades from importance, as the gold bars are pinned to their Army Greens: now, with the exception of Tom who has not yet passed his physical, they are all commissioned Second Lieutenants in the United States Army.

A montage of summer weddings ends this two-hour opening. Buck and Fran; George and Vonda; Art and Marcia ... beautiful people, beautiful couples, beautiful images. They are young, smart, trained to conquer, and in love. Holding the world at their command ... life can't get any better.

No one that summer could even imagine the hell that eventually lay ahead.

PART III

Beginning of the Vietnam years

Most of the “brand new” Second Lieutenants opt for the extreme rigors of Ranger Training at Ft. Benning, Georgia - under the tutelage of legendary commando, Colonel CHARLIE BECKWITH. However, Jack initially asks to be assigned to a Nike missile base outside of New York City, so that he can be close to Ginny - whose dance company is based there.

Ranger Training is what these men were made for, and Buck and George have finally found their niche. Unfortunately, when Art chooses the safety of the men under his command over the completion of the mission during freezing, wet weather, he is washed out.

Finally, the grueling training was coming to an end with a demanding last mission when the motto of Colonel Beckwith, "Expect the unexpected," almost drives the soldiers to their knees. Exhausted, cold, hungry, bone-tired from days without sleep - yet somehow lifted by the knowledge that they had completed their last mission in Ranger school - the men are on their last mile back to their quarters when Col. Beckwith drives up with a new mission assignment: Field 7 is under attack and the men must walk all night to come to its defense. In the bitter cold rain the men start their 20 mile walk. Before the dawn several men will have collapsed, or withdrawn from Ranger Training by not completing the assignment.

Yet in the end, most proudly wear their Ranger tabs on their shoulder sleeves, bent but unbroken.

PART IV

George becomes the first to reach the fighting in Vietnam. Within hours of landing in country, he's in the thick of it ... and reality hits when he realizes that every where he turns, people with strange foreign faces are trying to kill him.

This comes home the strongest the next day when George receives the news that the first member of the Class of '66 has fallen in combat. Hours later, he evens the score with his first kill.

Like a great warrior who rises to his call, George is soon leading a major operation against overwhelming forces in the jungle. The battle rages throughout the evening and deep into the night. Only when morning dawns, can he and his men leave. The stay-behind ambush has been a great success without losing a single man. His leadership earns him the undying respect of his men and a Silver Star for Gallantry. George's days as an exemplary soldier has begun. He's doing what he knew he was meant to do: leading men into combat and bringing them safely home.

In Japan, Tom is recuperating at Yokota Air base where his father is the Commanding Officer. Not having even been commissioned yet, since he's incapable of passing the

mandatory physical, the frustration of falling so far behind his classmates has built to a fever pitch. With his patience for rehabilitation worn out, he attempts to bribe his way onto a stateside flight without the necessary orders. He fails, and a major confrontation with his father ensues. Colonel Carhart agrees to allow his son to return to West Point for the physical on one condition. If he passes, he'll be able to begin his career. If not, he returns to Yokota.

Tom returns to West Point and passes the physical. Finally, upon completing Airborne, he rushes to meet Melissa in St. Louis, only to find another crushing disappointment. She has changed, and so have her feelings for Tom ... she breaks off their engagement. His agony continues when he returns to Ft. Benning. While attending Ranger School, he's bitten by a mosquito and becomes violently ill. Tom, once again, is forced to drop out and fall behind.

In Vietnam, Buck and Matt arrive. Buck's pride in having recently becoming a father is overwhelming as he brags about his new son ... Richard Thompson II ... aka, the Deuce!

Soon the two are with their respective units as platoon leaders. Buck leads an attack against North Vietnamese Regulars on Hill 875 and quickly finds out that the hill is saturated by tunnels. Before he can react, his platoon and the one to his flank, are surrounded by overwhelming forces. Matt is part of a rescue unit that tries to reinforce them, but is turned back by heavy fire ... vowing to return in the morning. Buck's unit manages to turn the tide slightly, but they're still pinned down and surrounded. He calls for an air strike close to their position to break them free. In an unexplained disaster that can only be listed under "fortunes of war", the pilot approaches the target from the wrong direction and drops the 500-pound bomb directly on the American position. Buck and several of his men are killed instantly. Matt finds the body the next day when his unit rescues the remaining Americans.

The funeral at West Point draws over two hundred mourners, where all eyes are on Fran and their son, Deuce.

Tom has finally caught up with his classmates by reaching Vietnam and joining the 101st Airborne. His bad luck haunts him however, as he's wounded in his first patrol against the enemy and sent back to another hospital to mend.

Tommy is also in the thick of the action as he leads an infantry attack near Binh Co. – which is an airmobile operation against a major Vietcong offensive that is part of the Tet New Year attack in 1968. They are fighting in a rice paddy from which Tommy is leading the attack from dike to dike when one of his men is wounded. Tommy maneuvers under heavy fire to successfully rescue him. As he stumbles back to the American position, an enemy machine gun opens up from the flank. Tommy is hit and instantly killed.

At West Point, hundreds of friends, family members, and those in the extended West Point/U.S. Army family, attend the funeral of Tommy Hayes. George and Art were given permission to come stateside for the funeral of their close comrade, and they are joined by their wives, Vonda, and Marcia, as well as Jack and Mark.

After the service, George tells Jack and the others, in no uncertain conditions, that this is a "bad war." Jack takes this harder than the rest for several reasons: the loss of Tommy who he considers a Prince, the growing anger of the war in Vietnam by the American people, and the avoidance of doing "his part" in the struggle. He and Mark chose to stay out the war in Southeast Asia by attending grad school at Harvard. Now, Jack begins to question his own

behavior ... wondering if he's upholding the standards of West Point and his duty to his country. The guilt grows deeper each day.

The action of the 1968 Tet Offensive heats up. Tom is at a hospital at Bien Hoa recovering from his wound when the base comes under attack. He displays quick thinking and decisive action that saves many lives in the hospital ward. Most importantly, his proficiency with one-on-one warfare is exhibited --- a skill which will come in handy later in Vietnam.

Tom returns to his unit and, under the direct command of his Battalion Executive Officer, finds himself leading a rescue operation of another company in his battalion. Tom's platoon is meeting constant enemy resistance and ambushes due to orders being given by his commander, who appears to have limited knowledge of fighting in the bush. Casualties are mounting, in spite of their success with the mission. Once again the Executive Officer gives a command that Tom regards as foolhardy and tells him as much. An order is an order ... but this time Tom disobeys and returns to the firebase with his platoon. As a result, Tom is relieved of his command with orders shipping him to another unit. In trying to defend his actions to the Battalion Commanding Officer, he's bluntly told that he is a disgrace - and that no one wants him around. Tom now feels like a complete failure.

His new assignment finds him as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Regional Forces (known un-affectionately as Ruff Puffs) in a sector that is rife with corruption. Just as he thinks things can't get any worse, he's approached by a CIA Operations Officer with an offer to become an operative in the notorious Phoenix Program --- the systematic assassination of Vietcong officers, politicians, and sympathizers. Tom is back in the action, but to the great dismay of his new Commanding Officer. He is warned several times to cease working with his CIA handler, but Tom loves what he's doing, and proves repetitively that he is an ace in the field. In doing so, he is once again disobeying the orders of a superior officer. This time he's not only reprimanded, but sent stateside - and out of the war for good.

PART V

After finishing at Harvard, Jack and Mark are sent to Vietnam ... at the same time Tom has been kicked out of the war. Mark has arrived ahead of Jack and has managed to arrange a cushy position for them both - far from harm's way. Those who hold these kind of positions are affectionately known as "Rear Area Mother Fuckers" - and not usually held in great esteem. After a tearful farewell with his father, Retired Col. Wheeler, Jack finally arrives - and nothing goes well. At one point, to be more effective in their new jobs, they illegally procure a jeep from the motor-pool. Unfortunately, they're caught and are disciplined with Article 15's. It's only a slap on the wrist, but it does nothing to help with moving their careers forward. Jack's disillusionment with the Army and the war in Vietnam is mounting. This further disgrace only adds to his resentment.

Art takes a leave from Vietnam for some R&R in Hawaii where he meets with Marcia. It's a romantic time, which is enhanced by good news. Art's next assignment will be to attend graduate school at Syracuse University before beginning a teaching assignment back at West Point. Marcia's elated, but the pain of watching Art board the aircraft for the return flight to Vietnam nearly rips her heart in half.

George also sees the end of the road in Vietnam. He recognizes that it's time to get out of this "lousy war" in one piece, so he gives up his Ranger command and takes a General's Aide position, far from the front lines.

Jack stops in Hawaii on his way back home after his tour has ended. He visits the Punch Bowl Memorial where he is struck by the impact of seeing his uncle's name - a pilot killed in World War II - etched in stone on the wall of the Memorial. He takes a photo to send to his mom. Little does Jack realize that the photo of that memorial burned deeply into his mind will someday lead him to his life's greatest contribution. Shortly, Jack returns to New York where he breaks off his relationship with Ginny - realizing, to her dismay, that they're become more friends than lovers.

Upon returning from Nam, Tom steps off the plane in San Francisco, wearing on his uniform the only thing he was proud of - his Purple Heart. In the terminal, several people point at him and speak in hushed whispers. Shortly, someone approaches him ... and spits on his chest, hitting his beloved metal. This effects Tom's state of mind for a long, long time. After all that has happened to him, he now faces a long battle ahead ... this time with his conscience. Eventually, he will be able to discover who he is ... which is really what West Point asks of all its men. In time, Tom returns to those talents within him that he reveres - and in areas he has yet to discover.

The war in Vietnam ends ... and the United States Army is in its greatest tailspin since its noble inception over two hundred years earlier.

PART VI

Post-Vietnam

After throwing a large and tasteless FTA (fuck-the-army) party, Jack resigns his commission in the army. He fulfills his mother's first desire and attends Yale to obtain his Law Degree. He has tried to "find his star," as her wish for him had been ... but, life has proved disillusioning.

George is in Germany trying to instill discipline to a demoralized post-Vietnam Army. Pot is the drug of choice throughout the service ... rock posters line the barracks ... race riots are erupting amongst the troops ... and the Army discipline is in a shambles in hopes of not offending potential enlistees in a post-draft era. This passive, permissive United States Army is not the army the Class of '66 knew... or any West Point man before them. George's work is cut out for him – but resigning is never far from his mind. His wife, Vonda's only response on one of his dark early days is, "Go and fix it!"

He decides to stay and fight – but George can no longer stand the embarrassment for the Army. He makes the men of his base clean up everything from their attitude to their living quarters ... and punishes those who don't. Finding that a great majority of the men are behind his tougher stance --- and a return to the "real Army" --- a major change eventually sweeps across Europe, and then through the United States. The turning point has begun.

Art has been teaching several years at West Point since he left Vietnam, but his desire to return to a line position and be in command of troops has not subsided. He gets his opportunity when he is told that his next assignment will be at the Korean DMZ.

It was not surprising that Art loved his tour as commander of the crack American and South Vietnamese forces that make up the Joint Security Area on the DMZ in Korea. But ... he hates dealing with the crazy, illogical North Koreans.

As his tour winds down, Art is looking forward to returning to the States ... and to Marcia and their three kids. However, he has one last assignment to complete: to trim a large poplar tree on the Bridge of No Return – an area considered "No Man's Land" - that is blocking part of the view of the North Korean side. Seems simple enough.

While Art is leading the work crew to trim the tree, an unreasonable and volatile "altercation" erupts. Art is brutally murdered by a pack of North Korean pipe-welding and ax-handle-bearing soldiers.

The event becomes an international incident and nearly ignites another war between North and South Korea – and all American forces are put on "high alert."

At West Point, Marcia is excitedly preparing for Art's return and their next move to Savannah, Georgia, when she gets the tragic news. Her public words to "refrain from further violence" cools both sides enough to prevent an attack. The Army, however, launches a symbolic invasion of the No-Man's Land to completely cut down the poplar tree ... under the watchful eye of the angry North Koreans. A plaque from the felled tree is then hung in the

Pentagon to commemorate the "free men" who died under the tree --- and those who "rose up and cut it down."

At Art's funeral, Jack suggests to Mark and Wesley Clark that a memorial be built on campus to all West Pointers who died in Southeast Asia. Matt and others join them ... and the memorial is dedicated a year later at a scenic spot adjacent to Lusk Reservoir.

PART VII

The creation of the Vietnam war memorial

The rising tide of military conflicts

(Closing Two Hours)

This success inspires Jack to join with JAN SCRUGGS in his stalled plan to build a memorial on the Washington Mall to all servicemen and women who died in Vietnam. Jack is named as the head of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation and recruits Mark and Tom to assist him. However, when the winning design for the memorial is unveiled, Tom takes passionate exception to it – it's too dark, too depressing, too ridiculous with all the names engraved in stone (like a phone book) - and has no American flag anywhere. ROSS PEROT and former Secretary of the Navy, JAMES WEBB, join Tom in trying to sabotage the planned memorial. For Jack, this is the toughest – and most important – battle of his life.

The years of animosity between Jack and Tom surface as these two classmates fight a very public battle before the cameras and the Congress.

In the end, the memorial stands. A slight compromise is reached by adding another statue nearby that includes an American flag, but Jack is overwhelmingly triumphant. When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is opened to the public on Veterans Day, 1982, the response is tremendously positive. After the ceremony concludes, a Nam vet – who lost everything to the war except his life - approaches Jack. With tears in his eyes, the vet is almost unable to speak ... but, he lets Jack know that this memorial made everything he went through for his country in Vietnam worthwhile. At long last ... Jack has found his elusive star.

George returned from Germany to West Point for a prestigious teaching assignment – and once again finds himself in the middle of a history-making event – the first class to admit female cadets. Although he helps keep the Academy on even keel through difficult times, he longs for what he was trained for – being in command in the field. During a night training exercise at Ft. Bragg, George falls from a tree and is immediately rushed to the hospital. After several weeks of painful recuperation, he once again attempts a jump that, if not exercised perfectly, could end his career. Knowing that if he isn't allowed to be a soldier, his life holds little value – he succeeds against all odds.

By 1983 George is one of the first men asked to lead the troops into the Caribbean island of Granada where American students were rescued under heavy fighting from Cubans and the Grenadian Peoples Revolutionary Army. The Army has begun its turnaround from the dark days after Vietnam – and George is honored by receiving the rank of a Colonel.

It is now 2001, and we return to West Point for the 35th Reunion of the Class of 1966 as they honor their classmates who paid the ultimate sacrifice in fulfilling their duty to their country.

Wesley Clark is introduced for the final speech of the ceremony. As he speaks we see a montage of events during the following passage:

“In the thirty-five years since our graduation from this historic institution, we have fought for America’s cherished freedoms in the jungles of Southeast Asia, in the No-Man’s land that protects the freedom of the people of South Korea, in saving our citizens and protecting the culture and free-passage of world trade in the lush Caribbean hills of Granada, in saving the culture and strategic oil reserves in the deserts of Kuwait, in protecting freedom of religion for Muslims and stopping the genocide in Bosnia and Kosove, and now in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Yemen, and wherever else terrorist armies threaten the people and culture of the world”

After the ceremony, the Class of '66, with other members of The Long Gray Line, stretch across the Plain as the Corp of Cadets Pass-in-Review. The members of the Class of '66 salute them, the newest members of The Long Gray Line.

THE END.

TRI-LAUREL PRODUCTIONS

Charles Floyd Johnson, Diane L. Robison, and Tom Cole, whose combined experience transcends the spectrum of the entertainment industry, recently formed TRI-LAUREL PRODUCTIONS. They are extremely pleased that Janette Webb has now joined them as an Associate Partner. Diane and Janette will be the Tri-Laurel producers for *Movie Talk*.

- Tri-Laurel is exceptionally proud of having recently acquired the rights to Rick Atkinson's book, *The Long Gray Line*. This best selling work of history is based on a series of articles for which Atkinson received the Pulitzer Prize. A story spanning 30 years, a seven-part mini-series has been recently finished. Also, recently finished is a treatment for a film concentrating only on the West Point years entitled: *Duty, Honor, Country; The Making of a Warrior*.
- Tri-Laurel also acquired the rights to the life-story of Ronnie West - who was born, as a result of Thalidomide, without any arms. Ronnie's incredible life includes accomplishments those less challenged would find hard to achieve. His inspiring story will be filmed by Tri-Laurel as a documentary for Oscar consideration. Titled *Reach: The Ronnie West Story*, it has been written by one of television's outstanding writers, Reuben Leder. This will mark Reuben's directorial debut.
- Tri-Laurel's first acquisition was a book called *Redwater, redwater*, which Tri-Laurel adapted as a play called *Waltz Me*. After several successful stage readings in Canada last summer, it is now being considered for Off-Broadway.
- Tri-Laurel is now in negotiations with **SHOWTIME** for a military series to be written by writer/producer Charles Holland.

Partner resumes to follow.

CHARLES FLOYD JOHNSON

Throughout his career, Charles has had the opportunity to produce some of the most successful shows in television.

Currently, he is Co-Executive Producer on *JAG* – making a vital contribution to its success since it moved, after its first season, to CBS. Last season he also served as Co-Executive Producer for *First Monday* ; and will repeat that position on a new Navy Intelligence drama which is going to pilot this season.

Before coming to *JAG*, Charles was Co-Executive Producer on *Quantum Leap*, *B.L. Stryker*, and *Magnum P.I.* (where he moved up from Supervising Producer and Producer), as well as Producer on the series, *Bret Maverick*.

After serving as Producer on *The Rockford Files* for several seasons (where Charles received an Emmy) – he later became the Executive Producer for the six *The Rockford Files* MOWs.

Also, he was executive producer, with partner Tom Selleck, of the television movies, *Silver Fox* and *Revealing Evidence* – as well as serving as producer on the pilots, *Simon & Simon* and *Hellinger's Law*, and Associate Producer on the *Ba Ba Black Sheep* pilot.

Charles is exceptionally proud of having produced PBS's *Voices of Our People: In Celebration of the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame* and the two Emmys that the Academy bestowed upon it.

Charles is a past officer (for several terms) on the Producers Guild of America Board of Directors, and is the creator of the highly acclaimed *Producer Guild of America's Oscar Micheaux Awards*. He is a member of the Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and was recently honored by “Minorities in Broadcasting” for his outstanding achievements. Charles, who graduated from Howard University and Howard Law School, is currently writing a book on the impact television has had on the African American culture.

Diane L. Robison

As an independent producer, Diane has experience in everything from reality-based pilots, documentaries, live (50-state) satellite productions, commercials, international video features, and theatre (musical and dramatic) --- to live award shows.

Diane was one of the original creators and producer (for nine years) of the distinguished *Producers Guild of America's Golden Laurel Awards*, and the prestigious *PGA Oscar Micheaux Awards* - whose last honorees were Quincy Jones and Tim Reid. Recently, she produced *THE BANDIES Awards*, the new international broadband & interactive awards show. This award show is credited with influencing the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in their decision to give an Emmy (as of 2002) to this emerging new field.

In this past decade, Diane created the prestigious Producers Guild of America magazine, *Point of View*, of which she served as Publisher and Editor-in-Chief. Diane distinguished herself in both the entertainment and publishing worlds, and *Point of View* – distributed worldwide - became one of the leading magazines in the motion picture and television industry.

Also, as a writer, she co-wrote (with producer, director, writer, Leonard Stern) the highly acclaimed television industry book *A Martian Wouldn't Say That*, published by Putnam Berkley Group. It is now in re-release, and the sequel will be published by Tallfellow Press in 2004. Recently, she teamed with Charles Floyd Johnson in creating his book about art vs. commerce in television - which will also be published in 2004. Additionally, one of Tri-Laurel's first acquisitions was a book called *Redwater, redwater* – which Diane adopted as a play, *Waltz Me*. Diane directed the first staged reading last summer in Canada, and it is now being considered for Off-Broadway.

Diane is a past-member of the PGA Board of Directors, has moderated six “Producers on Producing” seminars in both Los Angeles and New York – and was the first woman to receive the PGA's Award for Outstanding Contribution. She is a founding board member of the Musical Theatre Guild, is a member of Actors Equity Association, and was honored by the Kennedy Center in Washington DC with its Award of Excellence.

Tom cole

After service in the United States Army Counter-Intelligence Corps, Tom began his career as a producer in the field of entertainment. His experience spans a broad cross-section of productions from documentaries and game shows to musical variety and motion pictures – as well as a stint as an executive at Columbia Studios. Tom also has the distinction of being the producer/director of over 2000 films made throughout the world for the United Nations.

Some of his producing credits include: Producer/director of the Beatles documentaries, a series focusing on the first worldwide Beatles tour for the BBC; *The Tom Jones Show*; *Lie Detector*, starring F. Lee Bailey; *Up With People*, starring Pat Boone; *The History of Mexico*, a 42 episode PBS series; and *The Paris Air Show*, with General Chuck Yeager.

Recently, he was producer/director of the *50th Anniversary Salute to the United States Air Force*; served as Senior Producer of *Millennium Live* – a 24-hour worldwide variety telecast; was the producer of *Final Cut*, a live internet program featuring high-profile directors for Hollywood Broadcasting .com; and is a partner in the development of a "M*A*S*H," motion picture sequel. He has just finished two videocassette series for the Smithsonian titled *Born Wild*, and *Count Down to Space* with Wally Schirra. Currently, he is producing a half-hour strip show that will air on stations throughout the United States.

In addition, Tom is a partner in Big River Studio, a resort/studio complex in Davenport, Iowa; he is Chairman of Lotos International, Inc., an international marketing company; and serves as CEO of Security Environment, Inc., a manufacturer of automatic gas shut-off valves.

Tom Cole recently sat on the Board of Directors of the Producers Guild of America, and is past President of the Board of Trustees of Actors' Alley Theater, past Chairman of the Board of Entertainment Industry Council, a consultant to the California Crime Commission Task Force, and on the Educational Advisory Board of Rio Hondo College.