

John Bruce Dodds

Funeral services for John Bruce Dodds, Class of 1975, were held at the Academy Cadet Protestant Chapel on March 31, 1983, with burial in the Academy Cemetery. Mr. Dodds died of cancer on March 28 in Vacaville, Calif. While attending the Academy, Mr. Dodds had one leg amputated in April 1974, and Academy officials said he could not graduate because his handicap would prevent him from being commissioned as an officer. U.S. Sen. Gale McGee and Rep. Teno Roncalio, both Wyoming Democrats, introduced legislation to waive regulations so that Mr. Dodds could graduate. Before debate on the legislation got underway, Air Force Secretary John F. McLucas ruled that Mr. Dodds could complete his senior year and graduate with his class.

Mr. Dodds worked for Northrop Aviation in Los Angeles for two years after he was graduated. He was awarded a law degree from Notre Dame Law School in South Bend, Ind. and then worked as an attorney with the Houston law firm of Fulbright and Jaworski. The late Leon Jaworski was the Watergate special prosecutor.

Mr. Dodds was a member of the Cadet Mountain Club, the Academy Intramural Tennis Team and the Cadet Drum and Bugle Corps.

A portion of the eulogy by Colonel Malham M. Wakin, professor and head of the Academy's Department of Philosophy and Fine Arts, reflects the feelings of Mr. Dodds' friends and classmates toward him: "...Bruce was determined to graduate from the Academy although normal procedures would have had him released at the end of his junior year because he was no longer physically qualified for a commission. However, due to his own display of rugged persistence and the petitions of his fellow cadets to Congress and the Air Staff, Bruce was permitted to continue at the Academy and graduate with his class. He adapted well to a prosthesis, became a licensed pilot and flew in his own plane, and was an enthusiastic skier! The Graduating Class of 1975 presented Bruce with a special award of a plaque and sabre and at graduation when he received his diploma the entire Cadet Wing gave him a standing ovation. Here was an extraordinary human being, who fought best when a crisis was upon him— who responded with great spirit to physical hardship and pain — conquering those obstacles to do things that many of us only wish we could do. His goal was to make a meaningful contribution with his life and he fulfilled that goal even though he had many fewer years to do so than those of us who knew and loved him. His example of the virtuous life makes him one of our modern-day heroes, worthy to serve as an inspiration to coming generations of Air Force Academy and Notre Dame Students. He stood tallest when he had only one leg to stand on; perhaps his courage will be shared by those of us who are blessed with two healthy ones."

Mr. Dodds is survived by his parents, John and Mrs. Grace Dodds of Vacaville. Contributions in his memory may be made to the John Bruce Dodds Memorial Fund, Association of Graduates, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo. 80840.