

THE ECHO

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KEMPER LEGEND PASSES INTO HISTORY **COLONEL TEDSAN S TIMBERLAKE SR DEAD AT 91**

CORPS OF OLD BOYS MOURN DEATH OF KEMPER LEGEND

Letters of sympathy poured into the office of Echo Company when news of Colonel Timberlake's death was made public. From virtually every state in the union and twelve foreign countries the volume of sympathy notes has become overwhelming.



An inspiring and dedicated officer whose family held the rank of general for three generations. Timberlake so loved the cadets he served his life became dedicated to this end. In 1957 Timberlake sought to be allowed permission to make a parachute jump onto the west parade field during parade functions of Military Ball weekend.

BIGGER THAN LIFE

Major Tedsan S Timberlake Sr No one who ever met Colonel Timberlake would argue his inspirational tone and professional demeanor. His style of leadership was strictly "by example" and his ability to enthuse the spirit of cadets was an integral part of his character.

Often times his presence was all that was needed to persuade others to his point of view. President Harry S Truman called Timberlake, "My Dear Friend". Indeed thousands of cadets felt endeared to him and sought out his counsel and opinion on difficult life decisions.

Few figures in Kemper's history were as recognizable and respected as was Colonel Tedsan S Timberlake. Timberlake was assigned to head Kemper's ROTC department as the Professor of Military Science in August of 1957. Upon retirement from active duty in 1961 he accepted the position of Commandant of Cadets. It was in this position that he endeared himself to thousands of young men.

Born in Coblenz, Germany where his father was serving with the US Army as a Brigadier General, Colonel Timberlake later entered Greenbrier Military School in Lewisburg, West Virginia. Colonel Timberlake enlisted for active service with the US Army prior to January 1943 then attended the United States Military Academy



Preparatory School at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and the Air Force officer candidate school. He attained the rank of major in 1956.

During WWII, Colonel Timberlake served in combat in the European theater from February 1944 to November 1945. He commanded the 118th Regiment, 30th Infantry Division. Colonel Timberlake had two combat parachute jumps. In 1955 he was assigned as the Commanding Officer 11th Airborne Recon Company and later, as the Aide-de-camp to the Commanding General of the Third Army. He was subsequently assigned as the airborne liaison officer to Brazil and finally to Kemper in 1957.

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TIMBERLAKE DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO YOUTH

The photograph above, taken February 26th 1969, speaks volumes about the commitment and love Timberlake felt for the youth of our country. On bended knee the distinguished Kemper Commandant of Cadets inspects the hands of each Cub Scout prior to the Blue & Gold Banquet held that year at Kemper.

Timberlake was a sought after public speaker whose dynamic baritone voice boomed above crowds commanding attention as well as respect. Whenever and wherever he spoke, the audiences were reduced to witnesses as they realized the man with steel in his voice spoke words of truth, honor, and dignity.

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Colonel Timberlake spoke several languages fluently and was decorated with the Silver Star, Bronze Star for gallantry, Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Man's Badge w/star, Master Parachutist, Air Medal, and Glider Badge, among other awards. It was confirmed that Colonel Tedsan S Timberlake was the youngest First Sergeant ever to hold that rank in the history of the US Army.

Every cadet attending Kemper during the time Colonel Timberlake was Commandant of Cadets can vividly recall his emotional and moving exhortations to "Be Your Best". He instilled pride where none existed, built loyalty where there was mistrust, and created a winning spirit of excellence in every cadet he dealt with. No one who ever received a return hand salute from Colonel Timberlake got only the customary "good morning" or "good afternoon", it was always personal and uplifting – "GO BIG TEAM! YOU'RE LOOKING TALL!"

By
Don Bruning



TIMBERLAKE WAS TOUGH AS NAILS

"My folks took me to Kemper as an elaborate ruse. They thought an inspection tour would more or less "scare me straight". My dad walked the grounds, looked at the offices, and shook a lot of hands.

When we got to Major Timberlake's office my dad and 'Big T' talked for half an hour while I waited outside. When my dad reappeared he said I was coming to Kemper and that Major Timberlake had so impressed him there was no question of it. I just looked at my dad and said, 'The hell I am!'

My dad looked at me and said, 'No son! Your hell has just begun if you cross that man!'

During my three years at Kemper I did everything possible to avoid any interaction with Major Timberlake. I knew he was no nonsense and tough as nails. I respected him and admired him but I sure as heck never went to his office to see what kind of candy he had in the candy dish.

KEMPER
By
Richard R Bruning

LOVED KEMPER ADMIRER TIMBERLAKE

"What my brother said is true except that the decision to send him to Kemper was made back home in Nebraska. My brother had driven the family car into a culvert filled with rainwater and a reporter with the local newspaper just happened to take a picture.

There was Don's face and the family car on the front page of the Lincoln Gazette with the title "Heavy Rains Make Driving Difficult". Well, dad looked at that and said, 'Don, you are going to Kemper!' I started laughing at what I thought was Don's misfortune and dad looked sternly at me and said, 'What's so funny? You're going too!'

I almost yelled, "Why? I didn't do anything! Why do I have to go?" Dad just picked up his fork and said, 'Because you are his brother!'

I learned to love Kemper but above that I really came to respect the law and order of Major Timberlake.



TEDSAN TIMBERLAKE WORKED TO PRESERVE KEMPER'S HISTORY

When Timberlake assumed the duties of Commandant he discovered an old cardboard box stuffed clumsily inside an aging wooden desk. The box contained pictures and letters composing a kind of archive. Timberlake knew the images were ancient and represented an irreplaceable photographic record.

The photograph above, taken in 1893 was one of the images preserved by Timberlake. Nearly 400 such images were preserved through his direct efforts.



John Downs is the Adjutant of Echo Company, Kemper Military School who served as a cadet platoon leader, company commander and Corps Adjutant while Timberlake was Commandant of Cadets.

DOWNS REMEMBERS TIMBERLAKE

He was striking and powerful, charismatic and down to earth. I can't say we ever had coffee together or talked war stories but you only had to meet him once and you would never forget him.

I was not one of those kids who wanted to go to Kemper, my folks enrolled me. I decided it was not for me and let everyone know. First chance I got I was leaving by my own devices. Well, Major Timberlake got wind of my plans, called me to the office and sat me down. He said, "Son, you will learn to like Kemper. If you should decide that you don't want to be here all I ask is that you come and talk to me first, understood?"

I answered in the affirmative and Major Timberlake added, "If you leave this school without permission you will be considered Absent Without Leave or AWOL, you will be found, returned, and punished, understood?"

Again I answered in the affirmative and I was sent from his office with both an offer of counsel and a warning.

I always admired Major Timberlake. He was a soldier's soldier but more than that I knew he loved the cadets and was ever vigilant in looking out for our welfare. It was Timberlake who reinvigorated the Standard of Honor and restored the meaning, symbolism, and "nuts" behind it. He loved the Corps.

Timberlake loathed pornography considering it a disgusting attack on the most valuable component of our civilization – women.



**Dr. Edward E Ridgley KMS '66
President, Echo Company,
Kemper Military School**

My dear brothers, where should I begin? Do I console you? Then who shall console me? Do I offer you comfort? Then who shall comfort any of us? We have lost a truly great man in Tedsan S Timberlake and I have lost perhaps my closest friend.

I was a spindly youngster when I came to Kemper. It was Major Timberlake who mentored me, tutored me, encouraged me and, demanded the best from me. I owe all of who I am today to this man. A great sadness has filled my heart upon his passing for I so admired him that he was, in many respects, like a father to me.

When I met and married Martha I wanted to introduce her to only one person - Tedsan Timberlake! She, as did I, recognized that Timberlake was no ordinary man. He was above all else a caring mentor of youth.

I vowed to do my best to live up to his expectations of me. He encouraged me, lifted me when I was down, guided me when I sought help and never spoke harsh words to me.

I came to love Tedsan Timberlake and named my son for the man who became such an important part of my life. My entire life of service to country and love for Kemper is predicated upon the values which one man instilled in me, Tedsan S Timberlake.

As we remembered him, he forgot none of us and asked about individual Old Boys until his last days. You may not realize it but Tedsan Timberlake watched all of us from a distance with the caring love befitting a doting grandparent. He knew every cadet he was responsible for, he knew what company you were in, how many demerits you had and how you were doing in school. Timberlake knew the name of your hometown and the first names of each of your parents. He considered it his duty, his job.

Each of us have unique recollections of the man we called our Commandant. Some of you laugh and recall being "stuck" for this or that. Some of you remark about his enthusiasm, including his powerful hand salutes. None of us can say he left no impression on us.



**KEN O. BARLEY RECALLS
COMMANDANT TIMBERLAKE**

I loved Kemper and fit in well there. I played football and seemed to absorb the discipline and military aspects really well. I think I was a junior in high school when I was responsible for a platoon. I took that responsibility seriously and with determination. Major Timberlake was my role model, I patterned myself after the example he provided.

One time I "stuck" a cadet for having a dirty room and added the punishment of getting up early to work on his room. Major Timberlake wrote me a note saying the demerits were okay but the cadet must be allowed to get a full nights sleep. At the end of the note he added the simple sentence, "...you are doing a great job!"

That simple pat on the back did more for me than anything I experienced at Kemper.



**MURDOCK RECALLS FAMOUS
COMMANDANT**

Charley Murdock held a unique position within the Kemper Corps of Cadets, as the brigade Provost. Translated that meant he was responsible for the administration of the demerit system and oversight of "area" punishment. Such a position placed Murdock in almost daily contact with Colonel Tedsan Timberlake and allowed the former cadet a unique opportunity to interact with the man he knew as Commandant.

"Tough and fair! That is how I would characterize Colonel Timberlake. His system of overseeing the application of punishment within the Corps was a mirror of General Mark Clark, who said, "Discipline is training which makes punishment unnecessary!"

That is how Timberlake saw both demerits and area. Both were not a reflection of failure on the part of the individual cadet. Rather, a demonstration that he had not been properly trained by the cadet leadership or instructed by the staff.

As I came to understand the inner workings of the office of the Commandant I grew in respect for the man who held it. I admired Colonel Timberlake and worked hard to earn his respect.



The man that I am today, the character that makes up the fiber of my being, the self discipline, and any courage which I have, were all learned from one man – Colonel Tedsan Timberlake. To him I owe much. I have reflected often upon the time I spent as a cadet and working alongside Colonel Timberlake, I will miss him but I will always have his inspiring encouragement within me."



**KELLEY KNEW TIMBERLAKE
FROM BUSINESS END**

I was enrolled at Kemper when Major Timberlake reported for duty as the Professor of Military Science. We all thought he was "old school tough"! A no-nonsense kind of guy who really knew his business. It was apparent from the outset that he'd seen combat, it was part of who he was.

I rose through the ranks; I guess you would have called me a good cadet. I didn't get in trouble and rarely if ever got any demerits. In my senior year I was a platoon leader in "H" Company. I took my duties seriously and with passion just as those before me had taught me to do.

My ole man was proud of me and the future was bright, I had done everything correctly. The next year I was going to Western Michigan University and major in business. All my T's were crossed, all my I's were dotted!

Then one day all the seniors were granted a pass to Columbia, it was close to graduation so it was kind of an earned privilege. All of us took a change of clothes so we could fit in on the University campus. I was walking down the street in Columbia and two girls in a convertible drove up and called to me offering me a ride.

I may be a lot of things but I am not crazy! I hopped in that convertible and made the girls laugh as we drove around listening to the radio and feeling the wind in our faces.

When I got back I was called to the Commandant's office. A faculty member had seen me in the car and reported my indiscretion. I faced Timberlake who simply asked if I had been in the car wearing civilian clothes. I instinctively answered "yes".

I was reduced and lost my platoon for a short time. I later realized that my truthfulness had earned me the respect of Major Timberlake who interceded on my behalf and restored my rank and position.

A lot of people have called Timberlake a lot of things over the years but the one thing I shall always remember him for was his ability to teach young men important lessons.



SENTIMENTS OF KEMPER FACULTY REFLECTED BY SIMPSON'S



"Good Morning Big Coach!" "Good Morning Mrs. S." an always exuberant welcomed greeting from the ever charismatic Colonel Tedsan Timberlake. He was one of the most upbeat people whom we have ever met and could make a person feel special by the sincere warmth of his greeting. He always had a smile on his face and a friendly word for everyone. He was a man of great passion which was evidenced in his mannerisms, heard in his voice, and seen in his eyes which had the look of eagles. He was passionate about his country and served it valiantly, earning many honors; he was passionate about his family and reared three great and successful children who adored him; he was passionate about Kemper and the corps of cadets, whom he regarded as family and treated accordingly. He freely proffered advice and always had the time to listen to those who needed and sought his counsel. He was a man who was always on duty no matter the time of day nor the time of year. He had time for everyone who entered. He consulted teachers who had disciplinary issues with students, always seeking a fair and equitable resolution. He was readily accessible to the faculty and to the administration and was an easy man to work with no matter how small a problem nor how large. He had the ability to be a calming influence in that he could take disciplinary problems which loomed big in the mind of a teacher and put them into a proper perspective as he did with one of my Spanish speaking students during my rookie year.

As a teacher I did not allow "cussin" in my classroom, and my Spanish student, whom we shall call Juan, kept using the word, "sheet," as in "Oh, sheet" or "What the sheet was that" or "What the sheet did you say." You get the picture. When I challenged him on his usage, he would fall back on the old excuse of, "I no comprehend, Meeses Seempsonn. No comprehende, por favor." Obviously he was using his language and the system to knowingly get over, and that behavior was not going to fly!!!! When my tactics did not work, I booted Juan out of class and visited the good Commandant, and relayed the situation and thought this student could probably benefit from a little walk around the courtyard. Colonel T. and I had a good laugh over the situation but agreed that Juan could not go through six years of Kemper saying, "Sheet" in class. Juan walked his area and was seemingly cured as I never heard him mention the word in class again. However, whenever Ted and I would run into each other over the years, we would often inquire, "How the "sheet" are you?" and enjoy the laugh.

If ever a man loved his job, that man would be Colonel Tedsan Timberlake. He loved being commandant at Kemper. He loved working with all of us, the cadets, the faculty, the administration. General Douglas MacArthur ended his final speech to the Corps of Cadets at West Point, with these words:

"Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thought will be the Corps and the Corps and the Corps."

And so it is with Colonel Tedsan Timberlake, a man whom I believe to have lived those words. It has been our profound honor to have known and to have worked with this man.



PRAYER FOR COLONEL TEDSAN S TIMBERLAKE

By Fr Benjamin O. Worthington

Heavenly Father, we ask that you guide all of us in this time of grief and that you bestow your blessing and comfort upon the family and friends of Colonel Timberlake. Tedsan was a warrior but more than that he embodied the caring love of a parent as he watched over the boys of Kemper.

In his service to country, he was unparalleled, in his service to his fellow man he was without equal. Thoughtful, caring, kind, loyal, and loving, Tedsan embodied all that is good in the character of man.

We are privileged to have had one of your finest works walk among us Lord. Let our hearts be shining examples of the love you shower upon us each day. We ask that you give us the strength to accept the challenge of emulating this fine man and to use the example of his life as our beacon of hope.

Lift up our spirits, fill us with the warmth of your compassionate love. Receive into the kingdom of heaven your most noble servant, Colonel Tedsan S Timberlake. Rest upon his brow the wreath of victory which he so rightfully earned in your service. Harken the angels to announce his arrival before you with a clarion call befitting his devotion to you.

Rest upon his shoulders the duty of welcoming us when we are called to you with these words "Looking good Big Team! Looking good!"



TEDSAN S TIMBERLAKE

Eighth grade graduation picture taken in 1931

Photo courtesy of the Greenbrier Military School Alumni Association

GREENBRIER MILITARY SCHOOL

Young Tedsan Timberlake was enrolled at Greenbrier Military School in Lewisburg, Virginia in 1925 and left when he graduated from the eighth grade in 1931. This experience provided him with an intricate knowledge of cadet life and the hardships of living away from home.

Colonel Timberlake seldom called upon his youth experiences at Greenbrier for coaching points at Kemper, he did not need to. Indeed on one of the rare occasions when he spoke of his boyhood school it was to relate the terms of having received his first demerit; hiding chewing gum and candy in his rolled up socks.

Greenbrier was founded in 1808 and was one of the oldest military schools in the United States. The school was used as a hospital and Confederate barracks during the Civil War earning it the wrath of occupying Federal troops who burned the campus to the ground. It was rebuilt and continued in operation until 1972.