

Carl Robert Arvin

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Ypsilanti Native, 2x Silver Star Recipient

By James G. Fausone



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Carl Robert “Bob” Arvin was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan on January 19th, 1943, to parents Carl and Dorothy Arvin. Bob grew up in Ypsilanti with his parents and younger brother, David. The home was a wholesome environment with supportive parents devout in their Catholic faith. He experienced what some would consider the stereotypical 1950’s childhood, a paper boy for the Ann Arbor News while in elementary school. Bob was also a Boy Scout, and eventually an Eagle Scout, counseling younger kids at Bruin Lake Scout Camp.

He attended Ypsilanti High School, where he demonstrated great intellect, athletic ability, and leadership. Arvin was on the football team, as well as the wrestling team captain. On the academic side, he was a member of the National Honor Society, president of the student council his junior year, and his senior class president. Arvin graduated in 1961 as the valedictorian of his class, with his Athletic Director describing him as “one of the most outstanding students and leaders to graduate from Ypsilanti High.” Already a promising young man, he would receive many scholarship offers and even an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

In July 1961, Bob started at West Point as a member of the Corps of Cadets Class of 1965. He was able to establish himself as a leader in his class very early on. While in the academy, he continued an academic record similar to that of his in high school, succeeding at the highest levels while also supporting a number of

extracurricular activities. He became one of the top wrestlers in the nationally competitive East Coast Intercollegiate Association, and was named Captain for the Academy's 1964-1965 season. His wrestling coach was crucial in the adoption of the Arvin Wrestling Award, given annually to a graduating wrestler who best exemplified the qualities of Carl Robert Arvin in the areas of leadership, scholarship, and commitment to Army wrestling.

During his time at West Point, Bob continued to exemplify leadership and commitment in every way possible, serving as a leader in the Student Conference on US Affairs. Bob was selected to be the First Captain and Brigade Commander of the Corps of Cadets in his senior year by the Commandment of the Cadets, General Davison. When Davison selected him, he said "it was my privilege as Commandment to select Robert to be First Captain. I admired him greatly; he was a concerned, compassionate leader who held the complete respect of fellow cadets." With Bob serving as First Captain, he hosted Dwight Eisenhower for his fiftieth reunion for the class of 1915 where they broke ground on a new campus building. Arvin also led the Corps of Cadets later in President Johnson's inaugural parade in Washington, D.C. Arvin graduated from West Point 44th in a class of nearly 600, winning multiple awards and was even a finalist for a Rhodes Scholarship.



Bob Arvin and his
wife, Merry Lynn
Montonye

Bob graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant and went to Fort Benning, Georgia in August of 1965 to complete specialized training. He completed Ranger and Airmaster Jumpmaster schools and decided to make the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, his new home. Arvin's selection of the 82nd Airborne Division as his unit continued to show his dedication and desire to serve with action wherever he could.

In July of 1966, Bob married his childhood friend turned girlfriend, Merry Lynn Montonye at their home church in Ypsilanti. They spent the first nine months of their

marriage together before Bob was assigned to Vietnam in early 1967 as an advisor in the Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

He reported to the 7th Vietnamese Airborne Battalion in May of 1967 and this team was in charge of protecting a crucial air base just north of the DMZ between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. On September 5, 1967, Arvin's unit was deployed in an assault that brought them under intense fire. Despite this, Arvin supervised an evacuation of those wounded, and although wounded himself, he continued to advise and assist his unit in the battle. For his actions in this battle, [Carl Robert Arvin was awarded a Silver Star](#) and Purple Heart. After a short hospitalization from his injuries, he returned to his battalion which was preparing to clear enemy forces from another air base.

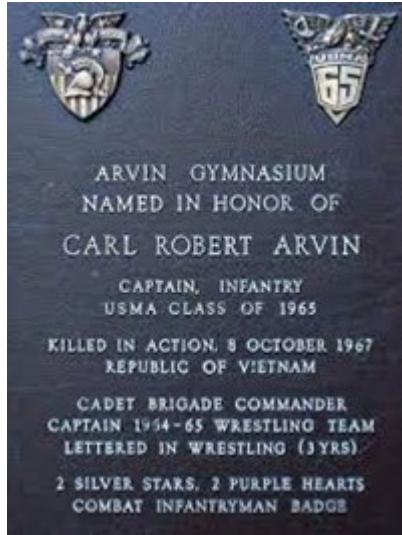


During a battle on 8 October 1967, Arvin showed great courage

and leadership; however, he was severely wounded during this battle and ultimately died on the battlefield. Shortly after Arvin's death, General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of the United States Military Forces in the Republic of Vietnam, wrote to Arvin's parents stating, "he was one of the most outstanding young men I have had the privilege of knowing. The Army has lost one of its future leaders." His actions were recognized as crucial in assisting his battalion to defeat the enemy force. Because of this, [Arvin would be awarded a second Silver Star](#) and a second Purple Heart; Robert was also posthumously promoted to Captain.

Arvin's body was returned to his home of Ypsilanti, Michigan, where his funeral was held at St. John's Church, the same church where he began his schooling and scouting. Bob was buried at West Point with full military honors on October 17, 1967. Important people from all stages of his life gathered to mourn, including his parents, younger brother, his wife Merry Lynn, classmates from Ypsilanti High and West Point, the West Point wrestling team, 82nd Airborne Members, and the Academy Superintendent. West Point decided to honor Arvin by renaming and dedicating the cadet gym as the [Arvin Gymnasium](#). Years later, in 2005, the gym was renovated and turned into a larger complex which was dedicated as the [Arvin Cadet Physical Development Center](#). This dedication took place as part of the 40th reunion of West Point's 1965 class where

they honored a number of military heroes from this class who died in Vietnam.



Arvin's memory lives on not only with his family, and friends,

and at West Point, but at home in Ypsilanti as well. The Michigan Military Museum has a display with some of Bob's military possessions, and at home in Ypsilanti, he is remembered in many ways, including having the former Ypsilanti VFW Post dedicated to him as the C. Robert Arvin VFW Post 2408. VFW Post 2408 also created the [Captain C. Robert Arvin Educational Fund](#), it awarded over \$80,000 in Arvin's memory until its dissolution in 2014. Bob has been honored by Ypsilanti High School and as a member of the Athletic Hall of Fame.

Despite being only 24 when he died, [Arvin made an impact in his community](#) that would last a lifetime. In every community he found himself, he made an impact. Whether it was in high school, at West Point, or during his time serving, he was always someone those around him could look up to as a leader. Arvin's lasting impact has been carried on by some of the people closest to him, as well as larger associations such as military history museums or VFW Post 2408. Captain Arvin's name has been used to continue to bring my good into the world through scholarship and encouragement of strong leaders such as himself. Anyone who knew Arvin personally stated how outstanding of a leader and incredible of a person he was, the people close to him knew he was bound to be a great Army leader one day if he had the chance.

About the Author

*Jim Fausone is a partner with **Legal Help For Veterans, PLLC**, with over twenty years of experience helping veterans apply for service-connected disability benefits and starting their claims, appealing VA decisions, and filing claims for an increased disability rating so veterans can receive a higher level of benefits.*

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