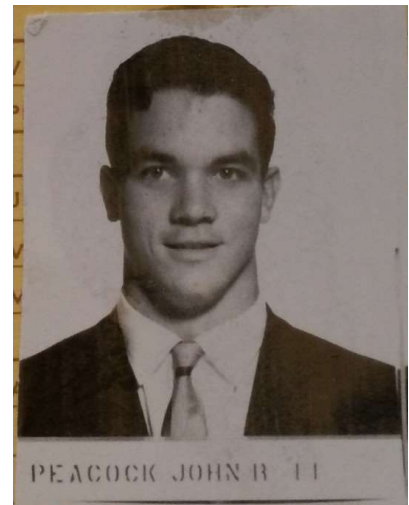


Jenni  
Gargano  
Professor  
Wright  
HIST96

Link to short movie about Robbie: [JRPII Movie.mp4](#)

Unlikely Warrior:  
John Robert (Robbie) Peacock II - Class of 1968

Opening the new academic year of 1964-1965 at Dartmouth College, Undergraduate Council President David Weber '65 stated that the Dartmouth man could not be “a whole man in any meaningful sense—without having acquired a social consciousness and without having developed some sort of feeling for other people and the capacity to relate to them.”<sup>1</sup> John Robert Peacock II, or Robbie Peacock as most people at Dartmouth knew him, exemplified what David Weber referred to as a “whole man” during his time at Dartmouth and his few years after that he spent in service to his country. Born and raised in Hawaii, Robbie was the only child of John Robert Peacock I and Patricia Cooke Peacock (who later divorced in his senior year of college).<sup>2</sup> He attended Hawaii Prep Academy, where he seemed to be an exceptionally well-rounded student: a leader in the school band and orchestra, a career member of the football team, captain of the baseball team, and student government vice president.<sup>3</sup> Following in his father’s footsteps and though he loved beaches and the warm outdoors, Robbie applied to (the “unbearably cold and isolated”) Dartmouth and began in the fall of 1964.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Weber, David R. "Dartmouth's 'Whole Man' Reconsidered: Undergraduate Address Delivered by Undergraduate Council President." *The Dartmouth* [Hanover] 24 Sept. 1964: n. pag. Print.

<sup>2</sup> "John R. Peacock Obituary." *The Coloradoan*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2014. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.  
Waterman, Dana. "Interview with Dana Waterman." Telephone interview. 12 Feb. 2014.

*In an interview with Dana Waterman, he informed me that Robbie's parents separated his senior year of college and that it was very taxing on his emotional state.*

Letter from Patricia Peacock (August 8, 1973). Alumni File of John Robert Peacock II. Rauner Special Collections Library.

*Robbie was born in Honolulu on September 4, 1946.*

<sup>3</sup> Greenbook, Class of 1968. Rauner Special Collections Library.

“Information for Greenbook and Other Purposes.” Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>4</sup> Parker, Richard. "Interview with Richard Parker." E-mail interview. 4 Feb. 2014.

During his freshman year, Robbie roomed with Jonathan Gregg Doll in Smith Hall 104 and originally signed up to study agriculture, probably because of his upbringing on his father's ranches and his interests in the environment and the outdoors.<sup>5</sup> Tom Brewer, a "tripee" of Robbie's from their freshman hike, described him as the most "physically perfect young Hawaiian man you could imagine, with a spirit [and] character that was equally beautiful...Robbie was open, generous, and interested in a positive way in the world around us."<sup>6</sup> Robbie played football in freshman year (trying to emulate his father), but he thought himself too small to play at the college level and decided not to play the next year.<sup>7</sup> Eager to continue with a sport, he originally asked a friend if he (the friend) thought it possible for Robbie to walk onto the hockey team—which made no sense considering he had never even skated before!<sup>8</sup> This aligns with the exact person Robbie seemed to be—always trying to engage in different activities and willing to connect with others. Unfortunately, Robbie's freshman year was cut short because of a terrible car accident over spring break with his classmate, Dana Waterman, in Iowa. He took a medical leave for spring term until September 1965 in order to recuperate back in Iowa at Dana's home.<sup>9</sup>

Robbie's later years at Dartmouth brought him new and exciting opportunities. In the fall of 1965, in what was deemed an uncharacteristically "low [year] on numbers, but high on quality" for

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*"In truth, we bonded on the fact that we were both from the West—I from Southern California, he from Hawaii, and both of us loved the beach and outdoors, and thought Hanover unbearably cold and isolated."*

"John R. Peacock Obituary." *The Coloradoan*.

<sup>5</sup> "Obituaries- Jonathan Gregg Doll." *The Transmission: The Dartmouth Class of 1968 Newsletter* (Fall 2013): n. pag. Dartmouth Class of 1968. Web. 12 Feb. 2014.

Reports and Transcript for John Robert Peacock II. Dean's File. Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>6</sup> Brewer, Thomas. "Interview with Thomas Brewer." E-mail interview. 5 Feb. 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Recommendation from James M. Taylor, Headmaster of Hawaii Prep Academy, dated 12/21/63. Dean's File. Rauner Special Collections Library.

"Interview with Dana Waterman."

<sup>8</sup> Chandler, Wells. "Interview with Wells Chandler." Telephone interview. 5 Feb. 2014.

*Wells was a lacrosse teammate, fraternity brother, and close friend of Robbie's. He donated a painting to the lacrosse office (to Andrew Towers) in memory of Robbie a few years ago.*

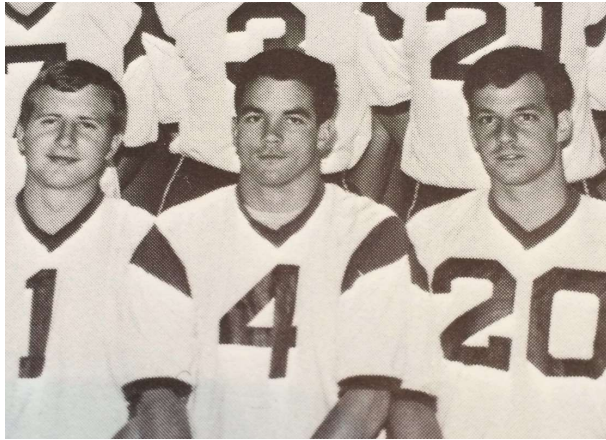
<sup>9</sup> Rich, Bill. "Interview with Bill Rich." Telephone interview. 9 Feb. 2014.

"Interview with Dana Waterman."

Letter from Albert Dickerson, Dean of Freshman, dated 4/20/1965. Alumni File of John Robert Peacock II. Rauner Special Collections Library.

*Confirming Robbie's medical leave for spring 1965.*

men to be joining fraternities, Robbie was one of 18 men to join Theta Delta Chi, which Peter Wonson referred to as the “Animal House.”<sup>10</sup> An anomaly then as it is now, Robbie did not drink alcohol, and would walk around Theta Delt fraternity parties with a cup of water.<sup>11</sup> He was accepted as “one of the guys” and got along with everyone, but at the same time, held onto his personal values and did not compromise them for the status quo. Additionally during his sophomore year, Robbie joined the varsity lacrosse team. Though described as a dependable player by teammates and as someone who “consistently turned in impressive performances,” Robbie was not the most aggressive on the field.<sup>12</sup> No matter how coordinated and capable, Robbie felt reluctant to take advantage of or hurt the other team—showing his truly good-natured qualities



even in competition.<sup>13</sup> He served on the Undergraduate Council in his last year at the College, and even made it on the Dean’s List according to his mom.<sup>14</sup> He declared an English major, and filled the rest of his schedule with religion, philosophy, and government courses.<sup>15</sup>

Dartmouth’s campus went through a shift between 1964-1968—from few articles in campus publications covering news of the war to classes covering Vietnamese history, regular and consistent coverage of war opponents’ meetings and talks, and even an organized “teach-in” against the war.<sup>16</sup> Despite being in Dartmouth’s Navy

<sup>10</sup> “New Fraternity Members- Fall 1965” *The Dartmouth* [Hanover] 23 Sept. 1965: n. 2. Print.  
Wonson, Peter. “Interview with Peter Wonson.” Telephone interview. 5 Feb. 2014.

<sup>11</sup> “Interview with Bill Rich.”

<sup>12</sup> Yearbook: *The Aegis*, 1968 & 1969. Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>13</sup> “Interview with Bill Rich.”

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Patricia Peacock. Alumni File of John Robert Peacock II.  
Reports and Transcript for John Robert Peacock II. Dean’s File.  
*Robbie graduated with a 3.32 GPA after the fall of 1968.*

<sup>15</sup> Reports and Transcript for John Robert Peacock II. Dean’s File.

<sup>16</sup> “Vietnam History Class to be Taught by Professor Mirsky” *The Dartmouth* [Hanover] 10 Oct. 1966: n. pag. Print.  
“Vigil for Peace” *The Dartmouth* [Hanover] 18 Jan. 1967: n. pag. Print.

ROTC program, Robbie's doubts about the war were, in some ways, very strong—though he was in no place to do anything about it because he was committed to service starting after graduation. But, "...His reasons for service were personal: he loved his father, who had been a Navy flyer in WWII as his grandfather had been one in WWI—so there was a strong genealogical pull that had gotten Robbie to where he was."<sup>17</sup> According to Richard Parker, a friend of Robbie's in senior year from their membership in Casque and Gauntlet Senior Society (where they both lived that year), he and Robbie stayed up nearly the entire night of April 4th, 1968—the night of Dr. King's assassination—walking around campus, talking about the Vietnam War, civil rights and Dr. King's message, the upcoming presidential election, and justice—feeling as though their values and beliefs were shattering before their eyes. Parker noted that by the end of the night, Robbie knew that "he would do what he had to, but...his heart was gone now. Somehow the dream of learning to fly and doing what his father and grandfather had done wasn't enough to justify killing in this war."<sup>18</sup> Graduation nearing and the war looking more and more vicious everyday, Robbie even considered resigning his ROTC commission.<sup>19</sup> Though struggling to balance his love and admiration for his family and his own sense of what was right and wrong, Robbie chose to complete ROTC and fulfill his duty. Robbie did not graduate with his class because of his medical leave in freshman year, and instead finished up classes at the end of the fall of 1968.<sup>20</sup> Robbie left a positive and bright mark on the community he touched.

Robbie's personality was the opposite of the stereotypical image of a fighter, but his courage and dedication negated this contradiction. He spent the summers of 1967 and 1968 in basic

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<sup>16</sup> Spritzler, John. "What Causes a Political Sea Change?" *New Democracy World*. N.p., Feb. 2012. Web. 10 Feb. 2014.

<sup>17</sup> "John R. Peacock Obituary." *The Coloradoan*.

"Interview with Richard Parker."

<sup>18</sup> "Interview with Richard Parker."

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

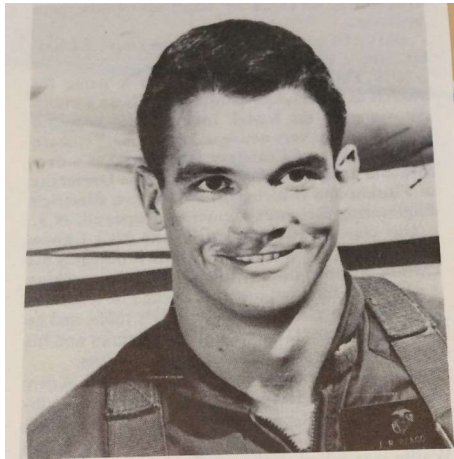
*He briefly even entertained the idea of applying to the Peace Corps and wondered if it were too late.*

<sup>20</sup> Commencement Exercises for 1968 and 1969. Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>20</sup> Reports and Transcript for John Robert Peacock II. Dean's File.

*Robbie officially graduated on January 11, 1969.*

training in Quantico, Virginia, where he earned the Honor Man award of his Officers Candidate



*As of this summer, Captain Rob Peacock '68 was still listed as "missing in action." His plane was shot down October 12, 1972 over North Vietnam, his mother has written.*

School platoon.<sup>21</sup> Completing flight training in March 1969 in Pensacola, Florida, he was presented with the High Flyer Award and named to the Captain's List.<sup>22</sup> Robbie received his naval aviator's "Wings of Gold" and served with the Second Marine Aircraft Wing in North Carolina, and eventually went overseas to Vietnam in July 1972 as a Marine Corps Captain.<sup>23</sup> On October 12, 1972, Captain Peacock and First Lieutenant William Price, the co-pilot on this flight, were assigned a combat mission over North Vietnam, part of President Nixon's "brutal Operation Linebacker."<sup>24</sup> Their last known location was about fifteen miles west of Dong Hoi in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> Their aircraft, an A6 Intruder, failed to return to the base as scheduled, and the two were never released or acknowledged as POWs by the North Vietnamese. In 1973, Robbie's mother wrote to Charles Breed in Dartmouth's Office of Development that there was "hardly a glimmer of hope" for Robbie's return and that his status was listed as "Missing in Action."<sup>26</sup> In 1976, his status changed to "Died While Missing" and, even since, his body has yet to be recovered.<sup>27</sup> This fact alone almost makes it even harder to deal with the death of a young man who so brightened the world around him.

<sup>21</sup> 40th Reunion Book. Obtained Robbie's page from Peter Wonson. 2008.

"Pilot Not on Prisoner Lists," Newspaper Clipping. Alumni File for John Robert Peacock II. Rauner Special Collections Library.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> 40th Reunion Book.

<sup>24</sup> "John Robert Peacock, II." *The Virtual Wall*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2014.

"Interview with Richard Parker."

<sup>25</sup> "John Robert Peacock, II." *The Virtual Wall*.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Patricia Peacock. Alumni File of John Robert Peacock II.

"John Robert Peacock II." *Virtual Vietnam Veterans Wall of Faces*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Feb. 2014.

<sup>27</sup> "John Robert Peacock, II." *The Virtual Wall*.

Although his life was short, Robbie exemplified what is to be a “whole man” in the most meaningful of ways. Every alumnus who reminisced about him spoke of his genuine kindness, force of personality, non-judgmental character, gentleness, innocence, and beautiful smile. He was able to transcend strict boundaries at Dartmouth and fell into different roles: an athlete, a fraternity brother, *and* a kind soul—someone who questioned and was critical of even his own actions and understood the actions of others even if they countered his own. His ability to relate to people—shown in the breadth and depth of his friendships—made him an incredible man, one whose life was cut off way too short. Robbie’s life, service, and its meaning is now only a memory, but can never be forgotten.

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