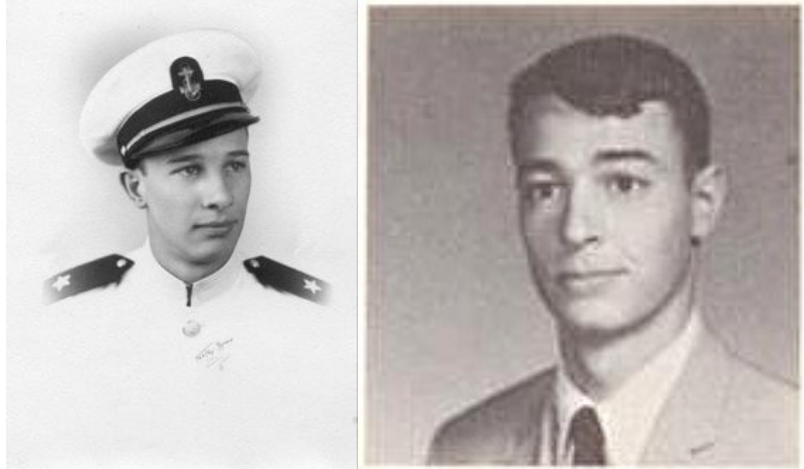


Fathers and Sons

The USS *Franklin*, an Essex-class aircraft carrier, maneuvered to within 50 miles of the Japanese mainland, closer than any other American carrier during World War II. Before dawn on March 19, 1945, the fleet carrier had launched a fighter sweep against Honshu and later against enemy shipping in Kure Harbor. *Franklin* was halfway through the launching of another wave of strike aircraft when a lone Japanese aircraft penetrated American air defenses undetected. The Japanese bomber unleashed two 550-pound, semi-armor-piercing bombs. One struck *Franklin*'s flight deck dead center, penetrating to the hangar deck causing massive destruction and igniting fires. The second bomb fell further aft, slicing through two decks. *Franklin*'s aircraft began to burn and their ordnance began to explode. Before *Franklin*'s long ordeal ended, more than 800 of her crew would be dead. The ship would incur the most severe damage and the highest casualties experienced by any US fleet carrier that survived World War II. Among those never recovered was Lieutenant Gregory Clyde Schoper, US Naval Reserve. Five months later, his son, Gregory Carlylle Schoper was born at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



LT Gregory Clyde Schoper, left, and his son Gregory Carlylle Schoper, Clemson Class of 1968.

Lieutenant Schoper's widow married a soldier, Floyd Read, who helped raise her son. Later, a daughter joined the family. Growing up in an Army family, young Greg moved from base to base. He graduated from the American High School in Kaiserslautern, Germany and enrolled at Clemson in 1964.

Greg Schoper majored in parks and recreation management, but according to his classmate James Hudgens, Jr., "Greg's purpose in life was to be an infantry officer." Schoper joined the Pershing Rifles as a freshman and eventually advanced to assistant platoon commander. He also served on the Pershing Rifles' 4th Regimental Headquarters staff. Classmate Danny Rhodes recalled that "the PR's was like a fraternity - a military fraternity. When you drill together from 5-7 AM, again from 4-6 PM, and then clean weapons and accomplish other tasks from 8-10 PM, you become very close. We partied together, dined together, 'bummed around' together, lied together, and occasionally we studied together."

Schoper's military aptitude was often on display. "He took his preparation for membership in our nation's armed forces seriously, serving as an officer in the Pershing Rifles (both the Company C-4 Drill Team and later the 4th Regimental Headquarters), and the prestigious military honor society, Scabbard and Blade. He impressed me as a thoroughly professional cadet leader in every way, the virtual embodiment of Clemson's fine military tradition," wrote Simms Anderson. Anderson, two years behind Schoper in ROTC, remembered one particular incident in which Schoper's demeanor impressed him. One day, "he stopped me on my way to my company's formation on Bowman Field to chide me in a low, gentlemanly tone on my inattention to uniform dress: my socks were mismatched in color, one dark blue and the other

black. He smiled at my shocked apology and went on to his unit, and it is the benevolence of that correction which I will never forget. I still double check the colors of my socks to this day.” While at Clemson, Greg met another Army brat, a bright young lady named Sherry McKee from Greenwood, whom Rhodes described as a “true scholar and a leader.” Schoper was himself a leader, joining the Society of Military Engineers and, as a senior, being appointed the S2 intelligence officer of the ROTC Brigade. Selected as a distinguished military graduate in the Class of 1968, Schoper earned a commission in the Regular Army. Following graduation, he and Sherry were married.



Schoper entered the Army in December 1968. He completed Infantry Basic and Advanced training and attended airborne school earning his parachutist's wings. In October 1969, he arrived in Vietnam, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division.

On February 14, 1970, First Lieutenant Schoper was leading a combat patrol in the vicinity of Tay Nihn, northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border. At 1445 hours, the patrol was fired upon by enemy small arms and rocket propelled grenades. Over the next three hours, Schoper's patrol was involved in a continuing battle, calling on battalion artillery and mortars for assistance. At 1800 hours, as Schoper was leading his weary men back to friendly lines, he was mistakenly shot and mortally wounded by South Vietnamese forces.

Lieutenant Schoper's body was returned to the United States and he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart, Air Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Palm, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Parachutist Badge, and Expert Rifleman's Badge. He was survived by his stepfather and mother, Master Sergeant and Mrs. Floyd Read. Master Sergeant Read was then on active duty with the Army stationed in Huntsville, Alabama. Schoper was survived by his sister and his widow, Sherry. Five months later, their son Gregory C. Schoper Jr. was born.

