

2023 Hall of Fame Bios

John “Fritz” Burnett – Class of 1971

A leader from an early age, John “Fritz” Burnett thrived during his time at New Ulm High School. Fritz was elected class president, participated in choir and marching band, and excelled in football, wrestling, and track. After graduating in 1971, John went to West Point where he was a member of the wrestling team. He also taught Sunday school, joined the glee club and Russian Club, and was part of the cadet acting troop and the Plebe football team. It was during Fritz’s time at West Point that he developed a passion for languages; he became fluent in Russian, German, and Spanish.

A couple of weeks after graduating from West Point, Fritz proposed to Sara Josefina (Sari Jo) Disdier and they married in 1976.

Fritz’s career in the military included attending Airborne and Ranger school. He served with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY, where he received a commendation medal for his exemplary service. He went on to serve with the 72nd Artillery Group in Germany, where he commanded two batteries. He received a Meritorious Service Medal as well as a Commendation Medal for heroism. He then went to Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif. where he received the Commandant’s Award as the top student that year at the institute. This assignment allowed Fritz to not only learn more about the Russian language but also spend quality time with his wife and four children: Ginny May, Sarita, Marisol, and Fritz Jr.

In 1984, Fritz passed away from melanoma. Though only on this earth for 31 years, the impact Fritz made during that short time was immeasurable. From those high school days when his leadership skills and athletic talent took shape, to discovering his passion for foreign languages and proudly serving his country, Fritz’s hard work and determination never wavered.