



Christopher Lee Heard

A Natural Leader

Christopher Heard was a natural leader. No one ever doubted or disputed it. Colonel Tom Hobbs, for one, knew that Christopher Heard, a graduate of the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, was the kind of strong young man who led by example. He was known to say, "You have to make things count before you can make things happen."

And to his mother, Andrea Heard, "He was the perfect son. He was everything a mother wants in a child." The last words she spoke to Christopher were to tell him she loved him. And she knew that her son loved his university and the good friends that he was making there.

John J. Hinkle, a former Physics teacher who taught Chris, respected his character and "steel determination." "Today, in our garden of youth there are many weeds which makes the loss of a flower harder to bear," he said.

Christopher's first grade teacher at Mission Glen School, Bette Watkins, remembered him in the school play, in which he had the leading role. "His excitement and determination to make sure everything ran smoothly led to the success of our play. I will always remember that gleam in his eye, his bright smile and determined spirit," she said.

According to Colonel Hobbs, Director of Institutional Advancement at the Marine Military Academy, "Christopher was an individual that everyone looked up to. He served as an outstanding example for others to follow. He was admired by a lot of Cadets, and it was very disheartening—we were speechless—when we heard the news."

As Colonel Hobbs pointed out, during Chris's four years at the Academy, the young Cadet became "addicted to leadership."

He became a Company Commander his senior year, which placed him in charge of roughly sixty Cadets, "responsible for making sure they performed their duties, and providing for their welfare," Col. Hobbs said. "If any-

one was going astray, Chris was quick to get there and help. Superlatives come very easy when you're talking about Chris Heard."

He had been named Outstanding Senior Military Cadet upon his graduation from the Marine Military Academy, had excelled as a boxer and was named Sailor of the Year.

But Christopher, who graduated in the top 10 percent of his class, wasn't one to showboat, he said, explaining, "Chris was just well-rounded in everything that he did. He was a solid performer, the kind of individual you could always depend on to get the job done."

And this attitude, along with his leadership abilities, was rewarded with a Corps of Cadets scholarship to Texas A&M, as well as the Ranger Insurance Scholarship Award in 1999. Before his freshman year ended, Christopher would sign up to join the Marines, hoping to become an Ocean Engineer. A freshman pre-engineering major, he dreamed of becoming a Navy Seal Commando like his father.

One weekend, Christopher returned home, having told his parents, Les and Andrea Heard, that he was bringing home a couple of his friends from school. He arrived with fourteen Corps of Cadet members. He wanted his parents to know how much he loved his school, eager for them to meet a group of strangers who had all become such good friends.

It was a typical move by Christopher Heard.

After all, retired Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sgt. James Hager, who had supervised him at the Academy said, "Chris was hard but fair, and he never lost sight of how he started out as a private and had to work his way up, so he could identify with the first-year Cadets. Chris was an all around good person, and he had a great sense of humor." 🐼