

# What They Say

By B. B. *(Humor is potent medicine)*

## Captain John J. Kintaro remembered



Thirty years ago last Thursday (September 27, 1971) Captain John J. Kintaro was killed in action in the Vietnam War. A report released at the time by the Trust Territory Military Liaison Officer on Saipan said Captain Kintaro was the Pilot of an Army helicopter that crashed in Vietnam during a military mission. Kintaro was attached to the 187<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company.

Captain John Kintaro from the Island of Sonsorol was the first and only Palauan to die in combat in Vietnam. Many other Palauans who served in Vietnam were wounded in action, but John was the only one who made the ultimate sacrifice. His remains were brought to Palau on October 13, 1971 where he was honored in a state funeral, which was held at the Civic Center next to the Baseball field. His very close friend Senator Joshua Koshiba did a fine job arranging for the wake at Echang, the state funeral ceremonies, and the burial services at the Catholic Mission Cemetery.

I knew Captain Kintaro quite well. He was two years behind me at Mindszenty School in the late fifties and Xavier High School in Chuuk in the early sixties. He was one of those rare individuals who are blessed with golden personalities. As far as I can recall, nobody was ever angry at him and vice versa. He was a wizard in mathematics. He could do complicated math problems in his head and come out with the correct answer ahead of those of us who were attacking the same problem on papers. This ability probably accounted for his rapid rise through the ranks in his military career.

John Kintaro entered the US Army in 1966 as a private and was promoted to the rank of sergeant the following year. During his first tour of duty in Vietnam in 1968 he was wounded in action. I remember meeting him in Hawaii that year and asking him if he was calling it quits after his wounds had been healed. He said no; he was aiming at a higher goal.

In 1969, John was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia to attend Officer Candidate School where he graduated and was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. He served in Berlin, Germany for a while and then attended flight schools in the United States at Fort Walters, Texas and Fort Rucker, Alabama. He graduated with the rank of Captain. Shortly after his pilot training, Captain Kintaro signed up again for the war zone. He was killed in action barely three months into his second tour of duty in Vietnam. His wife, Masae Temengil and two children, son John and daughter Sumech survive him.

Captain John J. Kintaro's name is engraved on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC along with the names of over fifty thousand US service men and women who died in action during the Vietnam Conflict.

John Kintaro was a genuine Palauan hero. He and many other Palauan servicemen before and after him paved the way for today's young Palauan men and women in the US Armed Forces under the terms of the Compact of Free Association. If you are ever in the Washington DC area and have some time on your hands, visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Look for Captain John Kintaro's name. When you locate it, pause for a moment and say a short prayer for his family and the Republic of Palau.