



## John "Doc" Bahnsen

November 8, 1934 - February 21, 2024

–U.S. Army (retired) Brig (R). Gen. John C. “Doc” Bahnsen Jr., 89, fought his last battle and took his last breath on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at his new home on the ancestral family farm in Rochelle, Ga. He died of heart failure, with his wife, family and friends at his side.

General Bahnsen was a U.S. Military Academy (West Point) graduate, Class of '56, and one of the nation's most highly decorated combat veterans, with a distinguished 30-year career in the Army. A brilliant strategist, he developed armor and air tactics the Army adopted as doctrine.

He was born Nov. 8, 1934, in Albany, Ga., the elder son of John C. Bahnsen Sr. and

Evelyn Williams Bahnsen. “Doc” Bahnsen grew up primarily in Rochelle, Ga., where his father

was the county soil conservationist. Doc's father always wanted his sons to be in the Army, and

his brother Peter who also survives him graduated from West Point in 1958.

He went to schools

in Rochelle and Americus, and graduated from the Marion Military Institute in 1952. Following

Marion, he received an appointment to the United State Military Academy at

West Point N.Y. At

West Point he formed a “dislike of the petty, insulting and demeaning leadership style of some upperclassmen.” This experience helped form his caring leadership style that defined him as a career commander of soldiers.

Following graduation from West Point he initially chose service in the infantry, but quickly became aviation qualified in both fixed and rotary wing aviation and changed his branch to

Armor. In his early career, he commanded Armor units in Germany and eventually was an

instructor in armor tactics at the Armor School at Ft. Knox.

He married his high school sweetheart, the late Patricia “Pat” Fitzgerald, and they had four children.

Doc’s career continued to develop, and he commanded units at various levels from

platoon to brigade. He was a graduate of the Army’s Command and General Staff College and

The Army War College. But where Doc excelled was in combat command. In 1964, “Doc” was

ordered to Vietnam where he led “The Bandits,” an attack helicopter command (1964-65), to

legendary early success in the early days of the Vietnam War. He returned to Vietnam, again in

1968 was assigned to the 11 th Armored Cavalry Regiment, “Blackhorse”, commanded by Col.

George S. Patton, son of the legendary World War II general.

There Doc was placed in command of the Regimental Air Cavalry Troop, whose mission

as stated by Patton was “to find the bastards,” and “pile-on”. He then commanded as a Major the famous 1 st Squadron 11 th Calvary. During his time with the “Blackhorse” he established himself as a true hero, earning numerous awards for valor. Following Vietnam his next command was a Tank battalion in Germany opposing the Russians in the Cold War. In 1974 he married Margaret “Peggy” Miller. She joined the Army soon after and earned a direct commission as a first lieutenant, retiring 22 years later as a lieutenant colonel. They were posted together throughout the U.S., and Korea. His last assignment was chief of staff of 3 rd Corps at Ft. Hood, Texas. Following retirement from the Army in 1986, General Bahnsen was a consultant, a sought-after speaker and writer on tactical and national military issues, and an involved advocate for the soldiers he so highly regarded. In 1995 after Peggy’s retirement, they made their home on her family farm at New Cumberland, W.Va., where they resided until the recent move to Georgia. In W.Va., “Doc” enjoyed working on the farm for wildlife conservation and running his hunting dogs. He and Peggy served on the State Republican Executive Committee and actively supported conservative candidates and issues, including active involvement in Camp Lincoln, a summer camp for young Republicans.

In 2007 Bahnsen published his autobiography, *American Warrior: a Combat Memoir of*

*Vietnam*, co-authored with Wess Roberts. It has been called one of the best combat accounts of

that war. The foreword was written by Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, a West Point classmate and friend.

Most of Bahnsen's 18 decorations for valor came in his second tour in Vietnam with the

11th Cavalry Regiment; Blackhorse fighting in more than 300 engagements.

His decorations include the Distinguished Service Cross, five Silver Stars, four Legions of Merit,

three Distinguished Flying Crosses, four Bronze Stars (three with a V for valor), two Purple

Hearts and 51 Air Medals. He was inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, the Georgia

Aviation Hall of Fame, was selected as an "Eagle" for the USAF Staff College "Gathering of

Eagles." He was selected by the Armor Association for the Gold Medallion of the Order of St.

George and in 2016 was named Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.

Surviving him are son Chris (Wendy) Bahnsen, and their children, Lauren (Chris)

Duncan and their son Wilson, Derrick (Emily) Bahnsen, and John Bradley "J.B." Bahnsen; son

Jimi Bahnsen; daughter LeeAnne Bahnsen and her children, Lana Harvey, Andrew Wall,

Bradlee Wall, Lea Harvey Brown and her son Brooks; and son Minh Nelson (Linh) Bahnsen and

their son John Sen, daughter Apsara and son William.

“Doc’s” remains were cremated according to his wishes. His ashes will be buried on the Georgia farm near the “Bahnsen Flagpole” in an Army ammo can. Memorial celebrations in Georgia and West Virginia are scheduled for 20 April 2024 at 2:00 and 4 May 2024 respectfully.

All are invited.

If so inclined, the family asks in lieu of flowers that donations be made to Fisher House

Foundation at [fisherhouse.org](http://fisherhouse.org) in honor of General Bahnsen.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life Service

APR **20**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Family Farm  
440 JB McWhorter Rd  
Rochelle, GA 31079

# Tribute Wall

MB

“ *I was his secretary for a year at Fort Benning Georgia. It was great working with him. He had a great group of officers. He was the greatest General. Will never forget him and I know he will go down in history and one of top Generals. Myra Hallmark Burch.*



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**Myra burch** - June 11, 2024 at 09:41 PM