



Gary W. Sandifer, 1974

Sandifer graduated from East Jefferson High School in Metairie and enrolled at Southeastern where, in the fall of 1971, he signed up for the Army ROTC program to fulfill his lifetime goal of becoming an Army officer. During his junior year, he served as Cadet First Sergeant to Cadet Captain John Byrnes. He was a member of the Reserve Officers' Association, and during his junior year represented the cadets in the Student Senate as their Senator. On 5 January 1973, he married his high school sweetheart, Jo Ann Binnings whereupon he moved out of Lee Hall and into an apartment in Kenner. Quickly tiring of the long commute, they moved into the University Apartments, which were, at the time, THE apartments in Hammond. Captain Richard Steiner, a cadre member, was their neighbor and many poolside parties took place there. Jo Ann helped to support the family by at the Social Security Office in Hammond. Jo Ann also help many starving students by offering them her famous spaghetti and meatballs, and red beans and rice. During this time with Captain Steiner, he and Sandifer conceived and planned Bandstand USA. The event was one of the most well attended on campus and became an annual event with Steiner, who was famous for his knowledge of rock and roll trivia, portraying "Click Clark" along with other cadets pantomiming famous rock and roll artists. Sandifer "performed," as none other than Elvis and his rendition of Jailhouse Rock literally had them banging and coming up on stage at times! In June of 1974, with Jo Ann carrying their first child due in November, Christine Elizabeth, Sandifer kissed Jo Ann goodbye, enthusiastically piled into a car with fellow cadet Robert Blue, and went off to Ft. Riley, Kansas on the adventure of his life up to that time. They drove all the way to Kansas City, Kansas and spent the night in a motel room, driving on to Ft. Riley the next morning; "huey" helicopters dotted the horizon of the Kansas plain! He knew he was where he was supposed to be! The two cadre officers assigned to his platoon was a West Point captain and a staff sergeant from Nicholls State. Just days into camp, he became company executive officer (XO) for the day, a day he cherished. His evaluation at the end of the day with the captain was very good, not excellent, but Sandifer was proud of himself that day. Alas, it was not to be. Two weeks into camp on AIT, he started having trouble breathing, a return of asthma, which had dogged him as a child. Other cadets in the barracks were suffering from hay fever and sinus

though some had never had such symptoms. The Kansas elements were testing many people. One promising cadet was relieved of duty after Sandifer and two other cadets tried to cover for him for an extreme asthma attack while out in the field. In one sweeping day, Sandifer saw a company medic, company doctor, post doctor, and ultimately a "bird" colonel, the chief medical officer at Ft. Riley. "Cadet Sandifer reporting as ordered, sir." "At ease, cadet" the colonel calmly said. "Cadet, I want you to go home. I want you to forget about the Army; forget about the Navy; forget about the Air Force. Just go home to your air-conditioned house! Dismissed." Sandifer replied, "Yes sir." He clicked his heels, did an about face, and went back to train for another day while normal Army paperwork and a benevolent company Master Sergeant intervened to get him discharged and home so he could get a job and salvage what he could of his summer to pay for the fall tuition. After returning home, he made an unsuccessful attempt to get a medic waiver. Back at school, Sandifer successfully campaigned for election as President of the Student Government Association. Then-Governor Edwin Edwards (at the recommendation of his fellow SGA Presidents from around the state) named him to be the first student member of the now Louisiana Board of Supervisors. In 1980, he went into business for himself as an agent for New York Life. He and Jo Ann had a son, Gary, Jr. on 9 September 1977. Christine is now married to Joe Reid and they live in Mandeville with Joe's son, Spencer. Gary, Jr. is married to Melanie Zumbro and has three children including a set of twins. The all members of the Sandifer family, other than Joe, are SLU Alumni. Southeastern is truly a family affair. Gary has served in various capacities for SLU including past president of the Alumni Association. He also stays active in the community, having been a volunteer firefighter for thirty years and active on the Boards of Directors of the Tangipahoa Parish Economic Development Foundation, Hammond Chamber of Commerce, and has over thirty years with the Boy Scouts of America including the Baton Rouge Board of Directors of the Istrouma Area Council. Sandifer is a recipient of the Boy Scouts' Silver Beaver Award, which recognizes noteworthy service by Scout leaders. Sandifer also a Chartered Life Underwriter in his professional capacity as an agent for New York Life.