

James L. Denham

Died: August 22, 1959

Jim left Dartmouth following his freshman year, and died at the age of 20 a little over a year later as a result of a tragic mishap on Saturday, August 22, 1959.

He came to Dartmouth from Garden City, New York. His father was a Dartmouth graduate, Class of 1931. At high school in his hometown, Jim was a member of the student council, the glee club, and participated in dramatics.

Our classmate Mike Houlahan remembers Jim fondly. "Jim," he writes, "my freshman year roommate from Garden City, Long Island, was a friendly, fun-loving guy who delighted in retelling stories of his father's hijinks at Dartmouth. Perhaps intent on having as much fun as his dad, he was unable to achieve a balance between partying and studying. Jim left Dartmouth at the end of his freshman year and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. In August 1957, during a weekend pass while in basic training, he went wading in the Mississippi, stepped in a hole and drowned. Despite efforts during freshman P.E., Jim had never learned how to swim. A year or two later, his younger brother entered Dartmouth and would complete his degree without difficulty."

Another classmate, Roger F. Schulz, writes, "Jim lived down the hall on the fourth floor of Topliff Hall from me. Ralph Parady and I spent many free hours talking, going to the movies, etc. with Jim. He was an entertaining storyteller. I really missed seeing him around after our Freshman year. I was pleasantly surprised to meet his brother as a member of Chi Phi (Heorot) later. I can still picture him in my mind and have many fond memories of our time at Dartmouth."

About a month after Jim died, his father Daniel wrote a letter, for the college's official records. "Jim was separated from Dartmouth at the end of his freshman year because of scholastic difficulties. He enlisted in the United States Air Force in November 1958, and was stationed at Kessler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi, where he was attending electronics school. On Saturday afternoon August 22, 1959, Jim developed cramps while swimming in a river near the base, and drowned despite the efforts of two companions to save him."

Funeral ceremonies were on August 27 in Garden City, his father writes, "and interment with full military honors followed."