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Prez Prose

Curt Brown, President

As 2023 comes to a close, where has the time gone? Seems like only yesterday we were having Thanksgiving dinners and watching football. Now we are deep in the Holiday season with many activities involving friends and family. 2023 was a great year for our family, the AOG. We had a wonderful Heritage dinner with the USAFA Commandant as our guest speaker. It was the best Heritage dinner in the country according to General Moga. We also had numerous other events, Tastings, Veterans Day dinner, and the luncheon speaker program to mention a few. Our Chapter continues to perform as a Distinguished Chapter due to the great support we get from our local Grads. But we cannot sit on our haunches, we must continue to strive for more participation and more inclusion of our local Grads.

With 2024 upon us, I expect great things from our AOG Chapter in the coming year. We plan on having some Tasting Events early in the year. Following that will be our Heritage dinner on May 18th. We are currently looking for a speaker since General Moga has moved to his next assignment. If you have any good contacts or suggestions, don't be bashful, let us know. Later in the year, we will be

having our St Croix cruise, followed by our Veterans Day celebration. We will also continue to have our luncheon speaker series scheduled throughout the year. All these events are great times to get together with fellow Grads and catch up and share stories. As we increase the number of events, the Chapter is looking to fill a new position. We want someone to step up and volunteer to be our new "Social Chairman". This can be one person or a group. Even if you don't want to be our new Social Chairman, there are many other ways to get involved with the Chapter. I challenge you to be more involved in 2024. You will be amazed at how much fun you'll have.

We also have some very exciting news to share. Our TCA-AOG Chapter has started a yearly Graduate Dependent Scholarship program. Any Grad dependent, be it a grandchild, child, or spouse will be able to apply. The scholarship amount will be at least \$500 or maybe more, and more than one scholarship may be given each year. Details of the application process will be coming very soon. The first scholarships will be awarded in the 2024-2025 academic year. Stay tuned!! As I said earlier, we are always looking at ways to increase our Grad participation. We understand that everyone is busy, maybe with kids in sports and other activities, but we think you may still want to be involved.

It may be just a lack of communication on our part. We just contacted AOG National to update our list of Grads in the local area and we learned of a new AOG portal that will come online in January 2024. It has an App and we already have a group page for our TCA-AOG chapter. I will let you know when it is fully up and running. We are also looking at having a point person for each Class of Grads in the area. This point person would be responsible for a group of Grads, preferably around their year group, to get the word out about events and other activities. Maybe with a little more personal contact, we can get more of our Grads involved. We are still working out the logistics, but if you have any great suggestions, please let us know. We are always looking for opportunities to improve our Chapter and welcome any feedback and ideas you may have. We have a Chapter email at USAFA.TCA.AOG@gmail.com or you can email me at curtbrown11@gmail.com or call me at (651) 295-5834.

Finally, as a reminder, our open membership Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the Richfield VFW, VFW Post 5555, 6715 Lake Shore Drive South, Richfield MN 55423. Heads-ups, this is a new location. All Grads are welcome and encouraged to attend. Happy Holidays to all! I look forward to meeting you or hearing from you in 2024.

Curt Brown, '78

Minnesotan's Military Appreciation Fund



Minnesotans' Military Appreciation Fund (MMAF) is a statewide fundraising initiative by the citizens of Minnesota for Minnesota military personnel and their families. Launched in August 2005, MMAF is a non-partisan, non-political, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. The mission of MMAF is to say "thanks" to Minnesota service members and their families who are making sacrifices in defense of our freedoms in combat zones around the world.

MMAF provides cash grants to Minnesota service members who have served in a combat zone since September 11, 2001. Grant applications are available online at thankmnttroops.org.

There are three levels of grant awards:

- \$5,000 to the families of those Minnesotans killed in combat.
- \$2,000 – \$10,000 for those Minnesotans who have received a Purple Heart Medal, with the amount based on severity of injury.
- \$500 to all Minnesotans who have served in a combat zone.

MMAF has awarded over 19,750 grants to Minnesota military personnel, totaling \$13.3 million dollars. Of those grants, 69 went to families of Minnesota soldiers killed in combat, totaling \$345,000, 534 went to wounded soldiers, totaling \$1,068,000. Of those Purple Heart recipients, 363 have submitted additional medical paperwork verifying injuries and have received \$2,360,000 and the remaining 19,000 + have gone to Minnesotans who have served honorably.

MMAF has received support from high-profile speakers at its annual fundraising dinner, with keynote speakers including Senator John McCain, Thomas Friedman, Vince Flynn, Tom Brokaw, General Stanley McChrystal, General Joseph Votel, Secretary James Mattis and General Paul Nakasone.

Since our inception, our supporters, volunteers, and service partnerships have made it possible for over 90 percent of donations to go directly to Minnesota service members in the form of grants.

To apply for a grant, or to donate to the organization, please visit www.thankmnttroops.org.



ALO Update

Fellow grads,

Introducing Students to The Long Blue Line

Air Force Academy Admissions Liaison Officers (ALOs) often receive questions from USAFA graduates about how they can point aspiring cadets to learn about and apply to attend the Air Force Academy. I have been serving as an ALO since 2006 and here is my advice to graduates when they speak to students and parents about USAFA:

1) Talk to students about your personal experiences at USAFA and in the Air Force and how those experiences have impacted your life. Many of us would highlight the friends for life we made with the people we studied alongside, the satisfaction of being challenged while serving a higher purpose, and the great feeling of accomplishment making it through the rigorous four-year program at USAFA. Your personal story can be very influential to inspire a student to seek out the Air Force Academy.

2) Point them to the USAFA Admissions website: www.academyadmissions.com. The site contains excellent information about the Academy, the application process, how to prepare to be a competitive candidate, a typical day for a cadet, the many extracurricular options available to cadets, as well as videos with testimonials from cadets and professors. USAFA Admissions created the site to appeal to today's digital-native generation.

MN currently has twenty-three Admissions Liaison Officers who stand ready to engage with students, answer questions, and mentor them through the application process. When the student opens their application with USAFA, they will learn how to contact their assigned ALO for further guidance. Before that formal mentoring relationship gets established, I think you will agree that both our alma mater and future cadets will benefit from the collective efforts of Air Force Academy graduates who share their experiences about how USAFA shaped their lives and careers. Thank you for engaging the next generation of leaders.



Pete Swanson, 95

Free Lifetime National Parks Pass

While approved in 2022 for Veteran’s Day, many Vets still don’t know you can receive a free lifetime National Parks pass. In the past there was only an annual option. See the linked website for eligibility and more information. You can apply online (\$10.00 service fee), or apply in person at eligible locations for free!



Veterans, Gold Star Families get free lifetime pass to national parks, wildlife refuges, other public lands

New pass provides free lifetime access and waived recreation fees for Veterans

November 8, 2022

By Courtesy of the National Park Service

https://news.va.gov/110751/free-lifetime-pass-to-national-parks/?utm_source=feature&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=VetResources&utm_id=22NOV2023

<https://youtu.be/vKBBgq5Fjcc>

New AFA North Gate Visitor Center and Hotel



Architect’s rendition



Construction site

The new USAFA Visitor Center and hotel at the North Gate is scheduled to be complete in 2024.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By Tom Wilson, '61



Since no one really responded to my request in the “Food For Thought” portion of the Fall Newsletter to share any thoughts, ideas and opinions, I will press on with some other thoughts.

The first one that comes to mind, is that I read an article in the “Catholic Servant” the other day about Catholic Universities and the necessity that teachers and professors at these universities be of the Catholic Faith. Not only that, but that these teachers – and I paraphrase – “who profess the Catholic Faith and, what ever their discipline/subject, teach it in the light of Christ.”

What has that got to do with us, you ask? So glad you did.

It is my opinion – repeat – my opinion, that a majority of professors on the staff of the Dean of Faculty at OUR Academy should be in a military uniform, preferably Air Force Blue, but with our brothers and sisters of the other services too. These military professors could also be retired men and woman that wish to continue teaching at our Academy. When the Academy first allowed civilian professors, it was for a period of one year under a special program set up by General McDermott, the first long-term Dean of USAFA. That seemed to work well, as I recall.

The idea is the same as stated above in the Catholic universities, that instruction should be in the light of a military career, or at the least, as serving the graduate commitment in uniform. The writer of the article I have referenced above, also stated that “The essential task of education at every level is not simply that of the passing of knowledge, essential as this is, but also of shaping hearts.”

“SHAPING HEARTS!!!!” How can civilian professors shape MILITARY HEARTS??? As a Cadet, I loved hearing “war stories” from those professors who chose to share their military experiences with me and fellow cadets when the opportunity arose. It made me even more excited to begin my Air Force career after graduation. That was brought home even more in Pilot training when instructors shared their “real-life” flying experiences.

YOUR THOUGHTS???

Another item: When Mark Hille, CEO of the AF Academy Foundation, was present at our Heritage dinner in 2021, he noticed the '61 Class Patch that I was wearing on the pocket of my dress coat. He asked where I got it and I explained that I thought every class got one prior to graduation. That, he said, is not true...

In short, I challenged him with the “mission” to rectify the problem and he accepted the challenge. I stopped by the AOG office when I went to Colorado for the army fiasco – sorry – game in November, and asked Mark for an update. He told me that it has not been an easy task, but that progress is being made and that he is hopeful that those classes without the pocket patch will be able to get one in the near future. Stay tuned.

One more thought and I will stop: Let’s talk Academy Hockey!!! I have made it my mission to get the Academy to play at least one hockey game a year in Minnesota – anywhere in Minnesota!!! You are painfully aware of the success that I have had – ZERO, except for making myself a nuisance to those at USAFA that I continually approach. I NEED HELP!!!

I had thought that when St. Thomas began playing Division One Hockey and was trying to fill their schedule, it was a “no-brainer” to schedule an annual home-and-home game. Not true, but, I’m not through. Years ago, the Academy played in the U of M Christmas tournament at Mariucci Arena. (We had over 250 attendees at those games...) IF ANY GRAD HAS ANY HOCKEY CONNECTIONS, PLEASE TRY TO ARRANGE EITHER THE HOME-AND HOME OR THE CHRISTMAS TOURNAMENT. It really is a “slam-dunk” since the Academy still recruits heavily in Minnesota for hockey prospects.

That’s enough for this issue. Please consider sharing your thoughts in future “Food For Thought” articles for our newsletters...

Cheers, Tom

Chapter Events: Past And Future

November 14 Veteran's Day dinner



Our grads met to celebrate Veterans Day on November 14 at Mancini's Char House in downtown St. Paul. We met there not because Mancini's has been voted the number one Supper Club in Minnesota, but because we wanted a charming evening where our grads and their families could enjoy a great meal and be treated as if they were royalty. Our expectations were met.

We had 23 show up for dinner and cocktails. Mancini's respect and take care of veterans and this evening was no exception. We had our choices of their widely known steak, walleye filet, or chicken. The servers seemed happy to be waiting on us and even brought cake for dessert. A range of grads attended, from young to oldest. We're not sure, but Tom Wilson, class of '61, was likely the oldest grad. It was hard to interrupt conversations once they got started but we updated grads on recent events and invited folks to the upcoming Luncheon Lecture Series.

It was a fun evening and some attendees already are planning to meet again next year. It's a date!

Terry Flowers, 64

Find Your Sipping Point! 27 January - Our very popular annual Scotch Tasting!

Look for CVENT sign up soon via email and web!



Come join us as we taste specially selected single malt whiskies on Saturday, 27 January, at the home of Terry and Margaret Flower. We will also have a MIA / POW table set so we will never forget what they gave.

WHEN: Saturday, 27 January 2024 at 2:00pm

COST: \$30 for a Single Attendee \$50 for Two Attendees

WHERE: Home of Terry and Margaret Flower 12880 Lock Blvd Hastings, 55033

We will taste, sip, savor and absorb the moments of five highly prized single malt scotch whiskies. Margaret, known for her culinary expertise, will prepare food pairings, including Haggis, especially selected to balance our appreciation of the subtle nuances of each whisky. We celebrate the birthday of Rabbe Burns, Scotland's poet laureate, toasting the lads and lasses at the table, and reciting his excellent poetry. Seating is limited to 20 tasters, so register early!

Questions? Call Terry at 651-261-8873.

Upcoming events: You can always check for the latest event updates on our website as well as CVENT signup links for events

Heritage Dinner – Save the date May 18th



Monthly networking breakfast



Who doesn't like breakfast! There are two monthly networking breakfasts. West side is the first Friday of the month, St Louis Park, East side is second Friday of the month in Lake Elmo. Details are on the events page on our website.

tcausafaaog.org

Facebook

[Minnesota Twin Cities Area United States Air Force Academy AOG Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1573865806263936)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1573865806263936>

This Newsletter Is Possible Thanks To These Great Sponsors



TCA AOG Key Personnel Roster

Twin Cities Area Chapter - USAFA Association of Graduates January 2024

If you need to contact the board, please use our new email USAFA.TCA.AOG@gmail.com

Chapter Officers

President	Curt Brown '78
Vice President	Mike Reiss '67
Secretary	Ed "Skip" Wipson, '88
Treasurer	Rick Knoll '65
Legal Advisor	Charlie Nelson '96
President Emeritus	Tom Wilson '61

Board Members (10) with term expiration included:

Name (spouse)	Term Expiration
Denny Sultany '64	2026
Mike Reiss '67	2026
Ed "Skip" Wipson '88	2026
Tom Wilson '61	2024
Bob Hockman '89 (Christine)	2024
Pete Swanson '95 (Angela)	2024
Curt Brown, '78 (Mary)	2024
Terry Flower '64 (Margaret)	2025
Rick Knoll '65 (Kathe)	2025
Zach Turcotte '00 (Jessica)	2025

Committee Chairpersons

Advanced Education	Terry Flower '64
ALO Programs	Ed Zarembo '07
Financial and Budget	Rick Knoll '65/Terry Flower '64
Fundraising	Open
Membership	Zach Turcotte '00
Parents' Club Coord	Bob '89 & Christine Hockman
Newsletter	Tom Wilson '61