Note 1: Class of ’69 Guide for Memorial Articles

The purpose of this guide is to assist company representatives in managing the company’s memorial article (MA) efforts and classmate volunteers in completing MAs for publication in AOG’s *TAPS* magazine, in concert with the next-of-kin (NOK) and the family, friends, and classmates of the deceased.

First, I thank you for stepping up and helping to honor our fallen classmates in this unique WP way! I’m told that WP is the only college with a magazine dedicated to memorializing its graduates. Our class has been resolute, compassionate, and successful in fulfilling this duty!

Second, this guide is but a starting point and cannot address every issue you may face in working to successfully complete an MA. Our POC at AOG, Marilee Meyer ([marilee.meyer@wpaog.org](mailto:marilee.meyer@wpaog.org), 845-446-1545) is an expert and is extremely helpful. I am also available to assist in any way I can including attempts to track down contact info you may need.

**General Information**.

1. AOG guidance: a 3-pager is attached including the submittal form to be signed by the NOK and sent to AOG with the narrative (target 900-925 words).
2. Annual due date for the article to be published in that year’s edition is 28 February.
3. AOG maintains a historical record on every person who attended WP called the Cullum file. Request the file for the deceased and AOG will send an electronic copy.
4. The NOK is key to success as each ultimately approves the narrative and picture selection and grants AOG permission to publish the article in *TAPS*.
5. The current spouse is normally the NOK. When circumstances exist that make determining the NOK challenging, we will turn to AOG for resolution.
6. The NOK usually has important information, reflections, and feelings to contribute, and can also provide contact info for children, other relatives, and friends of the deceased. Occasionally, the NOK may desire to participate in the writing of the article.
7. Everyone mourns and grieves the loss of a loved one differently requiring sensitivity on our part. I suggest sending the NOK a sympathy card which can double as an introduction (or re-introduction) and provides an opportunity to mention our interest in completing an MA “when you are ready.”

**Company Reps.**

1. I recommend each company take a team approach and have two (or more) classmates working together as their company reps. When family or work responsibilities, illness, or other situations arise that cause one to be unavailable for a short period or long term another is already fully up to speed and capable of handling the duties. (Currently, 15 of 32 companies have more than one company rep for memorials.)
2. I envision three tasks for company reps. The first and most important is finding the “right” classmate to take the lead with the NOK to produce the MA. Determining who to approach to serve as the lead classmate is often guided by friendship. Hopefully, a volunteer emerges early in the process, but several times those approached humbly declined for various personal reasons. Because of the importance of working closely with the NOK, someone with an existing positive relationship with the NOK is a good place to start. Does the NOK have someone in mind? Often, a corps squad teammate or an army buddy is a good fit. There have been numerous cases in which an MA was authored by a classmate from the original company of the deceased before the Corps expansion in 1967 moved many to new companies. Watch the testimonials that are posted on wpaog.org and west-point.org for possible candidates.
3. Second, encourage company mates to update their Cullum files. Each (including you!) should ask for an electronic copy from AOG (Mrs. Meyer) to discover what is in it. Then submit additional info (resume, bio, DD214, etc.) to AOG creating a more complete picture of themselves for future authors. I will send you separate paper on autobiographical information and tracking classmate progress.
4. Third, keep company mates informed and track their progress on the memorial articles that are works in progress within the company.

**Classmate authors.**

1. The MA is limited to about 925 words. AOG has the Howitzer photo. Coordinate the use of a different photo with Mrs. Meyer. Ask her for the deceased classmate’s Cullum file.
2. While there is no set format, MAs will typically address parents and childhood, high school activities, appointment info, cadet activities and successes, military service, civilian career, marriage and family, and his character. Basically, write a positive article that captures the essence of the classmate we and his family knew and loved. You can read many in the reunion memorial book or online in the “Be Thou at Peace” section on wpaog.org. The bottom line: ensure the NOK likes and approves it for publication!
3. Resources: The 10- and 20-year reunion books and Class Legacy book have reports in the deceased own words. At a minimum the Cullum file will contain cadet and earlier bio info in the cards we filed out. Find a copy of the obituary and watch the testimonials posted on wpaog.org and west-point-org. Talk to as many siblings, spouse(s), kids, classmates, friends, and co-workers as you can. Ask: “Who else should I interview?” You will learn much and face the real challenge of keeping the narrative to 925 words!

I am prepared to assist in any way I can. Feel free to call or email. I am at your service.

Bob St. Onge, Class Memorial Articles Coordinator

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