

Class of 1958 Perpetual Endowment for USMA

by John G. Evans and Edward "Ed" Weckel

On or about 4 June 2058, the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy should receive a large check from the USMA Class of 1958 Perpetual Endowment Board. The amount of the check will be equal to 25 percent of the funds in the USMA Class of 1958 Perpetual Endowment—a fund established at our 40th anniversary to assist the Academy train young men and women to serve their country. Our gift will continue at ten-year intervals, as stipulated in our Bylaws.

This is a story of a dream—a dream of the Class of 1958 to leave a perpetual gift to our Alma Mater, the United States Military Academy at West Point. It is the story of our desire to help prepare future generations of young men and women to serve their country, just as we were challenged many years ago when we first passed through the hallowed portals of West Point in July, 1954.

The story began at our 40th reunion, when the Class was briefed by Ed Weckel (D-1) on a proposal to leave a perpetual legacy in memory of our Class, a legacy which was designed to outlive all of us. Many members of the Class expressed their views. Church Hutton gave an impassioned argument as to why this proposal merited the full support of the class. He used the snowball analogy—that our fund would grow like a snowball rolling down a hill. Discussion was lively. Afterwards a brief lull ensued, until George Lawton, then Chairman of our Executive Committee, jumped to the podium and asked for a vote of approval. The members present gave their overwhelming support. Thus the USMA Class of 1958 Perpetual Endowment was born.

Four '58ers drafted the Bylaws for the perpetual endowment: Church Hutton, Lee Miller, Chuck Hansult and Ed Weckel. Afterwards the Bylaws were approved by the Class Executive Committee and by a Class vote.

Ed Weckel became the first Chairman of the Endowment Board, followed by Pete Brintnall and John Evans. Other class members of the Endowment Board were: Church Hutton, Lee Miller, Bob Rhodes and John Nun. They were joined by Meg Roosma and Dale Hruby Jr, graduating descendant members of our class, and Patrick Connelly, First Captain of the most recent graduating class ending in the number "8."

The initial funding campaign exceeded all expectations, due in part to \$5,000 donations by three classmates—two graduates and one non-graduate member of our class. But this story is more than just a few large donations; it's a story of love for the Academy and a respect for one another. It's the story of a classmate who wrote out nine separate checks of \$19.58 to honor nine deceased classmates, with the comment that he could have saved time and effort by writing a single check, but preferred to write them individually and reflect for a few brief moments on his

deceased classmates and what their lives meant to him. It's the story of two others, who each sent in checks to honor 32 deceased members of the Class, donating a sum of \$19.58 in memory of each. It's the story of the wife of a deceased classmate, who contributed \$1,000 annually as a gift in memory of her late husband; of a classmate who surprised us with a symbolic check for \$5,800, and another who contributed over \$100,000 to the Endowment.

It's the story of over one hundred '58ers who supported their Classmates with a per-mile pledge for participating in the first 15-mile Plebe/Alumni Marchback. It's the story of many notes received by the Endowment, indicating a desire to donate larger sums, but an inability to do so due to financial circumstances. It's the story of numerous contributions over the years made by both graduating and non-graduating members of the Class of 1958, each expressing their gratitude to USMA in his own way. It's the story of a bogus \$58,000 check, donated by Sigurski, which was raffled to the highest bidder, and won by a group of Classmates from the 2nd Regiment for \$2,900 over strong bidding from his own C-1 company mates. It's the story of Alan Salisbury, who matched the winning bid with a contribution of a like amount to the Endowment. And it's the story of George Sibert, who first suggested a goal of \$580,000 for our 50th Anniversary, which was then formally approved by our Class Executive Committee.

Not all members of the Class participated. Some wanted to see the results of their donations while they were still alive, and gave generously to other programs supporting the Academy. Still others believed it would be a mistake to use private funds to support the Academy. Those of us who contributed to the Class of 1958 Endowment respect the diverse views of our classmates.

The Endowment also had to compete with the Bicentennial Campaign for funds. However, in spite of the above, 497 members of our Class supported the Endowment, and donated \$396,000 to it. Will we reach our goal of \$580,000 by our 50th Anniversary? We don't know yet, but we are close.

This gift from USMA Class of 1958 is for the continuance of the Long Gray Line; for the precepts of duty, honor, country; and for the ideals we all cherished. It is for the benefit of those young men and women of our nation who support our set of values, who believe in the need to give something back to this great nation of ours in return for all the advantages they enjoy.

