



USMA Class of 1965

Strength and Drive

Clair F. Gill, President (703) 748-2171, clairfgill@cox.net
Robert L. Harter, Vice President (703) 455-3162, harterbobmary@aol.com
Jose L. Sanchez, Treasurer, (609) 304-4465, jlsanchez@comcast.net
Henry M. Dermody, Jr., Vice President, (410) 758-4816, dermody2@verizon.net
Dennis R. Coll, Secretary & Scribe, (847) 404-1767, dc65scribe@comcast.net
A. Ross Wollen, Historian, (212) 308-2991, rossw3@aol.com

Subject: Class Letter

To: All Members of the Class of 1965

1. Transition. I am honored to serve as your Class President through the next (45th) Reunion in 2010 and will do my best to live up to the legacy of my predecessors. Bob Harter was elected to serve as Vice President, with tremendous stability being provided by four “old hands” at this volunteer labor of love. They include: Denny Coll, Harry Dermody, Joe Sanchez, and Ross Wollen.

A tremendous note thanks and sincere appreciation is due to Fred Laughlin for his outstanding leadership of the Class over the previous five years.

While there are a multitude of other things to attend to over the interim years, clearly much of our energy will be focused on setting up the next Class Reunion.

2. 40th Reunion, September 2005. With a superb planning and leadership effort by Bob Frank, he and his committee pulled off what may have been our best ever Class Reunion last September at West Point. Over 240 classmates accompanied by spouses and significant others, along with several Class widows and their family members attended the three day event with most staying at the Thayer Hotel right on the hallowed grounds. Having selected a non-home football game weekend, we had the run of the post and top priority on many venues. Everything cooperated to make this a first class event – the weather, the Academy officials, and most importantly those who came to reunite and rejuvenate with our classmates and the school. Each event was better than ever, and you can still recapture much of it in prose and pictures on the Class AOG website, even to include scenes and music used in the Hollywood-class DVD that Fred Laughlin produced to stimulate our recollections. You may also want to browse the AOG website where you can look up emails and addresses of classmates, among many other useful features. Also, check the West-Point.Org site. We are indebted to our webmasters, Jerry Eichelberger (AOG) and Chuck Nichols (WP.ORG) for their dedication in maintaining these pages and the information contained in them.

3. Arvin Gym Entrance and Enhancements. One of the many highlights of the Reunion weekend was the dedication of our latest major gift to the Academy – the entrance to the mostly rebuilt Arvin Cadet Physical Development Center (aka Gym). The Academy did retain the “old” cadet gym with the running track and floor where cadets continue to be tortured by the DPE staff in running the indoor obstacle course that we recall so fondly. You may recall that, late in his Superintendency, Dan Christman made a short notice appeal to the Class to assist him with adding back many of the quality finishes that had been excised from the project by Congressional fiat. Many of you responded with the funds that Dan needed to restore this key cadet facility to a first class structure of which we could be proud. Bob Doughty then led the Class sub-committee that worked out the details of the entrance, memorializing Bob on one hand and the Class as well. What more apt slogan to be emblazoned on a cadet fitness center than our motto, “Strength and Drive!” [See the enclosed flyer.] Plaques that memorialize the 27 members of the Class of 1965 who died in the service of our country and Bob’s Silver Star citations are affixed on pillars directly in the line of entry. The dedication ceremony at the 40th Reunion was superbly planned and executed by Chuck Moseley, followed by tours of this impressive facility.

4. Staying connected. Current Class of 1965 actuarial statistics show:

847 entered on 5 July 1961

21 were admitted to the class from prior years

596 graduated on 9 June 1965

540 are still living

The reality is that we are all mortal, and our strength is decreasing. For many of us, this is an early bugle call to reconnect with each other. Our web site lists 14 classmates for whom the AOG has no current address. The AOG’s “Assembly” magazine that has served as a newsletter for so many of us over the years has only 265 paid Class subscribers. And, while 240 plus is a fantastic number to come to a class reunion, this leaves about 300 who did not come. Many of us are aware of classmates who, for reasons perhaps known only to them, have become disaffected and do not participate in class activities. I would like to suggest that we get ourselves organized in a manner that we reach out to those classmates and see if we can’t bring them back to the fold. Have you spoken with your old roommate(s) lately?

Over the past year, we lost our great friend, Don Parcels, who had joined us at the 40th Reunion. He provided a wonderful example of a true friend and a conqueror of the evil cancer that took his life. We have a number of classmates who are similarly fighting other illnesses, many successfully, and who benefit from our concerns, support and prayers.

5. Support to the Academy. We have many who have in the past, and continue today to support the Academy through a variety of means: funding support for the West Point Fund, the Army Athletic Association, the Long Gray Line Endowment (for the AOG); leadership support of Academy Admissions, local societies, and service on various committees, boards or advisory groups. Please keep this up and remain active.

Our Thayer Walk and Forum major donation at the 35th Reunion serves as one visual reminder of what we have done. While somewhat in the midst of a construction site at the moment, the Forum will be returned to its former grandeur once the Jefferson Library project is completed in another year or so. Your class committee is maintaining a vigilant watch on the gift.

6. Our Association of Graduates. The AOG remains our official link to the Academy, providing necessary support to the Academy mission, to the cadets, and to us. It is in the process of implementing a radically different governance structure, following a long period of reflection, analysis, and courses of action that led to decisions and approval. A good number of our classmates provided direct inputs through serving on various committees and as professional advisors. It will be a more streamlined and efficient organization that will improve on services provided while still being responsive to the alumni base. But, like all similar organizations, it will reflect the quality of the professionals who serve within it, as well as the elected leaders and boards who govern it. We all need to rally behind Ted Stroup ('62), the new Chairman, and the new President/CEO who will replace the retiring Seth Hudgins ('64). I encourage you to stay connected and support the AOG in any way you can.

7. Class Print. Ross Wollen generously commissioned (i.e., paid for) artist Paul Martin and directed the development of a wonderful print for the Class of 1965 that has been signed by four of our most illustrious graduates: Ric Shinseki, former Chief of Staff, Army; Dan Christman, former Superintendent, USMA; Bud Bucha, Medal of Honor recipient; and Bob Jones, former POW. A flyer is enclosed that depicts the print and provides information on ordering copies at a very reasonable price.

8. Army Sports Hall of Fame. Congratulations to Walt Oehrlein who, with brother Ernie ('64), will be inducted into the Army Sports Hall of Fame—our classes' first entry. Walt and Ernie will be inducted for Tennis and Squash on 29 September this fall. Together they won 12 Navy Stars, and Walt was the Intercollegiate Squash Champion our Firstie year. Well done, Walt.