



FORMING THE LONG BLUE LINE

THE GRADUATES

BY STEVE SIMON '77

An educational institution is only as good as its product. Bricks and mortar, books and buildings, staff and faculty can exert great influence on a school's reputation, but the final measure of a university's worth is how well its students perform after graduation. In this dimension, the United States Air Force Academy earns top marks.

Approximately 49,000 men and women have completed the Academy's grueling four-year course of instruction and gone on to serve the United States. Individually and as a group, graduates make a compelling argument for the national value of the Academy. The Academy was chartered first and foremost to produce active duty military leaders for service on and off the battlefield. In this regard, the Academy has succeeded magnificently, but grads also have made their marks in civilian service, space, sports, and almost every other aspect of American society. At the unavoidable risk of missing deserving individuals, this article highlights some of our most noteworthy graduates.

Any discussion of this topic must start at the beginning. The first group of Academy graduates, the esteemed Class of 1959, set a phenomenal standard for later classes to emulate.



Lt. Gen. Bradley Hosmer was number one in graduation order of merit and was the first Academy graduate to earn a Rhodes Scholarship. (Thirty-eight cadets have been so honored, most recently Rebecca Esselstein '15). Gen. Hosmer's accomplishments did not end at Oxford, as three decades later he earned the distinction of being the first graduate superintendent. To acknowledge his stellar service, he was awarded the 2003 Distinguished Graduate Award.

The Distinguished Graduate Award was first conferred in 2002 and is usually presented to two graduates each year. It is a unique honor bestowed by the U.S. Air Force Academy and its Association of Graduates, recognizing those graduates whose accomplishments are inspirational and elevate the reputation and the standing of the U.S. Air Force Academy. Thirty of the Academy's most illustrious graduates have been so honored. Most recently, Gen. (Ret.) Gregory S. Martin '70 and Mr. Paul Madera '78 received the award at the 62nd anniversary Founders Day Dinner in April 2016.



Gen. Robert Oaks, 2002 Distinguished Graduate Award winner, is another celebrated '59er. He culminated his Air Force career as commander in chief of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and served as commander, Allied Forces Central Europe.

Gen. Hansford Johnson '59 was the first Academy graduate promoted to four-star general (Harold Todd, his classmate, was the first grad to make brigadier and major general.). Gen. Johnson flew 423 combat missions during the Vietnam War, and later served as commander in chief of the United States Transportation Command and the Air Force's Military Airlift Command.

Other members of the Class of '59 have excelled as well. Col. Karol Bobko was the first graduate to enter the space program. He commanded the Space Shuttle Discovery in April 1985 and is the only astronaut to have flown on the maiden voyage of two Space Shuttle orbiters. Gen. Michael Carns served as Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, and Lt. Gen. Robert Beckel, the only person to serve as Cadet Wing Commander twice, was the first graduate to assume a senior leadership position at the Academy (Commandant of Cadets) in 1981.

2001
 Gen. Ronald Fogleman '63
 Mr. Harry J. Pearce '64

2002
 Dr. Paul G. Kaminski '64
 Gen. Robert C. Oaks '59

2003
 Lt. Gen. Bradley C. Hosmer '59
 Mr. Richard T. Schlosberg '65

2004
 Col. Frederick Gregory '64
 Gen. Ronald W. Yates '60

2005
 Gen. H.T. Johnson '59
 Gen. Michael E. Ryan '65

2006
 Lt. Gen. Robert D. Beckel '59
 Maj. Gen. Edward J. Mechenbier '64

2007
 Lt. Gen. Ervin Rokke '62
 Mr. Gregg Popovich '70

2008
 Maj. Gen. Donald Shepperd '62
 Mr. John Martinson '70

2009
 Gen. John Michael Loh '60
 Honorable Heather A. Wilson '82

2010
 Mr. Max F. James '64
 Gen. Ralph E. Eberhart '68

2011
 Brig. Gen. Ruben A. Cubero '61
 Mr. Richard D. McConn '66

2012
 Lt. Gen. Marcus A. Anderson '61
 Mr. Edward E. Legasey '67

2013
 Mr. A. Bart Holaday '65
 Gen. William R. Looney III '72

2014
 Dr. Thomas J. Eller '61
 Gen. Kevin P. Chilton '76

2015
 Gregory S. Martin '70
 Mr. Paul S. Madera '78

**DISTINGUISHED
 GRADUATE
 AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Following classes have upheld the standard of excellence set by the Class of '59. The Air Force has benefited greatly from the superior leadership provided by Academy graduates. Class of '63 graduate Gen. Ronald Fogleman was the first Academy graduate to serve as Air Force Chief of Staff. After flying 315 combat missions, he rose to be commander in chief of the U.S. Transportation Command before being tapped as Chief of Staff. He was the first military recipient of the Distinguished Graduate Award. Another of Gen. Fogleman's many distinctions is that he was the first Academy graduate to deliver USAFA's commencement address, which he did in 1996.



Four other Academy graduates have served as Chief of Staff: Gen. Michael Ryan '65; Gen. Norton Schwartz '73; Gen. Mark Welsh III '76; and current Chief, Gen. David L. Goldfein '83.

In 1983, the Academy welcomed its first Academy graduate Dean of the Faculty in the person of Brig. Gen. Ervin Rokke '62. Rokke also had been the first Air Force Academy graduate to be appointed a permanent professor.

In the past 12 years, female Academy graduates have taken their place in the General. Officer ranks as leaders of character. In 2004, Janet Therianos, a member of the Academy's first class with women, the Class of '80, was nominated for promotion to the grade of brigadier general, making her the first female Air Force Academy graduate selected for promotion to flag officer rank. Also in 2004, Brig. Gen. Dana Born '83 became the first female Air Force Academy graduate to serve as Dean of the Faculty. A year later, Brig. Gen. Susan Desjardins '80, joined the Academy leadership team as the first female Air Force Academy graduate to take on the role of Commandant of Cadets. Finally, in August 2013, Lt. Gen. Michelle Johnson '81, completed the USAFA leadership trifecta, taking over as the first female Academy graduate to serve as Air Force Academy superintendent.

Gen. Janet Wolfenbarger '80 also holds a very distinct position in Air Force and Air Force Academy history. On June 5, 2012, she became the Air Force and the Air Force Academy's first female four-star general, as she assumed command of Air Force Material Command.



Approximately 655 Academy graduates have earned general stars. This list is long and distinguished, and is certain to grow much larger as Academy graduates continue to excel.

The Vietnam War provided ample opportunity for graduates to demonstrate the discipline and heroism forged during their Academy matriculation. Thousands served honorably in the war, including more than 150 who died there and 33 who suffered as prisoners of war. Each has a compelling story, but space constraints preclude telling all but a few.



Capt. Lance Sijan '65 is the most famous of the Academy war heroes. On Nov. 9, 1967, he was forced to eject behind enemy lines after his F-4 fighter jet was disabled and his crewmember was killed. Despite a skull fracture, a broken hand and a compound fracture of his left leg, he managed to evade capture for 45 days after rescue

efforts were unsuccessful. Shortly after his capture, despite his greatly weakened condition, he overpowered his guard and escaped again, albeit briefly. In captivity, he endured horrific treatment and brutal torture, never losing his resolve to escape and return to the fight. On Jan. 22, 1968, he died from his injuries and mistreatment. Upon his own eventual release in 1973, cellmate Guy Gruters '64, told Sijan's story. Sijan's conduct merited the Medal of Honor, which President Gerald Ford presented to Sijan's parents on March 4, 1976. In May of that year, the Air Force Academy honored Sijan, the only Academy graduate to earn the Medal of Honor, by naming the newer of its two dormitories after him. He is the only grad memorialized with an Academy building.

Sijan is by no means the only Vietnam War hero. Capt. Valmore Borque '60 was the first Academy graduate to die in combat. The first graduate to down a MiG was then-Capt. Robert E. Blake '59. 1st Lt. Karl W. Richter '64 was the youngest pilot to down a MiG in combat. On his 198th combat mission, he was shot down and killed. Then-Capt. Richard S. Ritchie, also Class of '64, was the Air Force's only pilot ace of the war. Then-Capt. Jeffrey Feinstein '68, a Weapon Systems Officer in the F-4 Phantom II, also became an ace in 1972.

Graduates continue to serve — and make the ultimate sacrifice. Five grads were killed in action and four were held prisoner of war in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

Two graduates, Leroy Homer '87 and Charles Jones '74 were killed in the September 11, 2001, attack. The ensuing struggle has taken the lives of several Academy graduates, most recently Maj. Adrianna Vonderbruggen '02 who died during an insurgent attack in Afghanistan on Dec. 21, 2015. 1st Lt. Roslyn Schulte '06 became the first female graduate killed in action, also the result of an IED in Afghanistan.



Fortunately, not all the heroism resulted in the loss of life. In 2003, Capt. Kim N. Campbell '97 recovered her damaged A-10 after it was struck by a surface-to-air missile. Despite losing hydraulics and sustaining heavy damage and the partial loss of her aircraft's tail during a close air support mission over Baghdad, she was able to land safely in Kuwait. She received the Distinguished Flying Cross for the mission.

It is not necessary for graduates to remain in uniform to serve their country, as the following examples demonstrate. The previously mentioned H. T. Johnson '59 has served as assistant secretary of the Navy (Installations and Logistics), as well as acting secretary of the Navy. Dr. Paul Kaminski '64 served as under secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology from 1994-1997. T. Allan McArtor, also Class of '64, served as administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, and is currently chairman of Airbus Americas, Inc. Terrence O'Donnell '66 served as Department of Defense General Counsel. Gary Grappo '72 and Jim Smith '74 have both worked as U.S. ambassadors. Lawrence Romo '78 is the current director of the Selective Service System and Chuck Reed '70 was the 64th mayor of San Jose, Calif. Class of '80 Will Gunn served as general counsel for the Department of Veterans Affairs and currently serves on the AOG Board of Directors.

Class of '82 graduate and Rhodes Scholar Heather A. Wilson made her mark in politics. In 1998, she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, making her not only the first Academy graduate elected to the House, but also the first female veteran in American history to serve in Congress. She is currently the president of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.



AIR FORCE CROSS RECIPIENTS

Donald D. Stevens '60
Monte L. Moorberg '61
John L. Carroll '62
Phillip V. Maywald '63
John B. McTasney '63
Jackson L. Hudson '64
Karl W. Richter '64
Richard S. Ritchie '64
Michael C. Francisco '67
Dale E. Stovall '67
Jeffrey S. Feinstein '68
Rowland H. Worrell III '68
Joseph A. Personett '69
Tilford W. Harp '70
Donald R. Backlund '71
Richard C. Brims '71
William F. Andrews '80
John T. Aalborg Jr. '94
Barry F. Crawford Jr. '03



Among his four Space Shuttle flights, he was commander of the Hubble Space Telescope repair mission and piloted the Shuttle program's critical return-to-flight mission following the 1986 Challenger disaster.

Another area of graduate achievement is America's space program, as many grads have followed Karol Bobko's lead. As a point of interest, the Academy has produced 40 astronauts. Among them, Frederick Gregory '64 became the first African-American astronaut to pilot the Space Shuttle, as a member of the Challenger crew on mission STS-51B in 1985. He was later the first African-American to command a space mission (Discovery in 1989). In 2005, Gregory was named NASA's acting administrator. Col. Richard O. Covey '68 also distinguished himself in the space program.

Among the other renowned astronauts is Col. John E. Blaha '65, who flew a total of six Space Shuttle missions as pilot, spacecraft commander, scientist and mission specialist. He participated in joint U.S.-Russia research while residing aboard the space station Mir from September 1996 until January 1997. Gen. Kevin Chilton '76, a veteran of three Space Shuttle flights, assumed command of Air Force Space Command in 2006, becoming the first and only astronaut to earn four stars. Col. Charles J. Precourt '77 flew four Space Shuttle missions, logging more than 930 hours in space. Then-Major Susan Helms '80 was the first military female astronaut. She flew on four Space Shuttle missions and spent 163 days onboard the International Space Station during her 12 years as an astronaut. Helms logged a total of 5,064 hours in space, including a spacewalk of 8 hours and 56 minutes in 2001 (a world record for longest spacewalk duration). For their accomplishments, all of these illustrious individuals are enshrined in the Astronaut Hall of Fame.

Graduates also have brought great credit to the Academy in a variety of civilian endeavors. Again, there are far too many worthy individuals to mention. Several who have excelled: Harry Pearce '64 earned his law degree and rose through the ranks at General Motors to become vice chairman. He was later named to the position of CEO at Hughes Aviation. He also was the first civilian recipient of the Distinguished Graduate Award.



Pearce's classmate, Paul Kaminski '64, is another Distinguished Graduate Award winner. While on active duty, Dr. Kaminski worked with Secretary of Defense William J. Perry on the DoD Stealth and Counter-Stealth program and had a pioneering role in the National Reconnaissance Office. After his

stellar government career, he served as CEO of Technovation Incorporated and has served in multiple advisory and board positions.

A third civilian Distinguished Graduate Award recipient was Richard Schlosberg '65. He served as president and CEO of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Prior to that, he was the publisher and chief executive of the Los Angeles Times and the Denver Post.



Perhaps the most publicly famous of all Air Force Academy graduates is Chesley Sullenberger '73. On Jan. 15, 2009, Capt. Sullenberger landed US Airways flight 1549 on the Hudson River after the plane hit a flock of geese and lost power. His actions saved the lives of all 155 people on board. For his actions, Capt. Sullenberger

was awarded the Academy's 2009 Col. James Jabara Award for Airmanship. Established in 1967, the Jabara Award is presented annually by the Academy, the AOG, and the Jabara family to a USAFA graduate, living or deceased, whose actions directly associated with an aerospace vehicle set him/her apart from contemporaries.

A final area of graduate success is the world of sports. The Academy program requires individuals to be well-rounded, with athletics being an important part of the curriculum. Air Force Academy scholar-athletes have fared well in the sports world after graduation, reflecting credit back on their alma mater. Twelve Air Force Academy graduates have participated in the Olympic Games. In 1976, Class of 1970 graduate Robert Nieman became the first Academy graduate to compete by taking part in the Modern Pentathlon. Three years later, he became the first American to win the International Modern Pentathlon Individual World Championship. Class of



1983 graduate Alonzo Babers won two track gold medals (in the 400 meters and the 4-by-400 meter relay) at the 1984 Olympic Summer Games in Los Angeles. Men's epee fencer Seth Kelsey '03 has participated in three Olympic Games, finishing a tantalizing fourth place at the 2012 games in London. Two grads,



MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT Lance P. Sijan '65

David Higgins '16 and Cale Simmons '13, competed in the Rio Olympics in 2016. Higgins competed in the small bore rifle shooting, and Simmons in the pole vault.



In pro football, 1988 graduate Chad Hennings starred at defensive end for the Dallas Cowboys, winning three Super Bowl Championships (1993, 1994 and 1996). Gregg Popovich, Class of 1970, has excelled as head coach for the San Antonio Spurs of the National Basketball Association, winning five NBA championships and three Coach of the Year Awards, including in 2014.

While in no way providing a complete accounting of notable Air Force Academy graduates, we hope we have conveyed the depth and breadth of the extraordinarily impressive service which Academy graduates have given to the nation.

THE GRADUATE WAR MEMORIAL



1959

Capt. Davis, William Sheldon III
Col. Derrickson, Thomas Gardner II
Capt. Halbower, Harlow Kenneth
Capt. Oberdier, Lyn Douglas

1960

Capt. Bourque, Valmore William
Maj. Davis, Robert Charles
Capt. Hyde, Michael Lewis
Capt. Mills, James Dale
Maj. Morton, James Edward Jr.
Maj. Waters, Samuel Edwin Jr.
Maj. Waugh, Grant Reed

1961

Maj. Apodaca, Victor Joe Jr.
Capt. Bull, Robert George Jr.
Capt. Dixon, Lee Chris
Lt. Col. Koonce, Terry Treloar
Capt. Moorberg, Monte Larue
Maj. Morgan, Burke Henderson
1st Lt. Sanders, Thomas Andrew
Capt. Stackhouse, John Ernest
Capt. Walker, Thomas Tyler

1962

Capt. Baker, Samuel James
Capt. Brinkman, James Martin III
Maj. Brucher, John Martin
1st Lt. Carn, Robert Marion Jr.
Maj. Carroll, John Leonard
Capt. Franco, Charles Stephen
1st Lt. Griffey, Terrence Hastings
Capt. Griffin, Charles Farrell
1st Lt. Hauschildt, John Charles
Capt. Hornaday, Ralph Jefferson Jr.
Capt. Martin, Harreld Pirtie
Capt. Moore, Charles Larry
1st Lt. Watson, Donald David
Maj. Wilson, Gordon Scott

1963

1st Lt. Adams, Lee Aaron
Capt. Bunker, Park George
Capt. Butterfield, Douglas Holman
Maj. Clark, Thomas Edward
Maj. Gilchrist, Robert Michael
1st Lt. Goodman, James Donald
Capt. Hathaway, John Hooper V
Capt. Hemmel, Clarence Joseph
1st Lt. Knudsen, Harold Eugene Jr.

Maj. Mitchell, Thomas Barry
Capt. Newberry, Wayne Ellsworth
Capt. Pirruccello, Joseph Samuel Jr.
Maj. Ralston, Frank Delzell III
Capt. Rex, Robert F
1st Lt. Skoro, John Peter Jr.
Capt. Thomas, Leo Tarlton Jr.
1st Lt. Wax, David J.
Maj. Wynne, Patrick Edward

1964

Maj. Alfred, Gerald Oak Jr.
Lt. Col. Jefferson, James Milton
1st Lt. Krogman, Alva Ray
Maj. Lodge, Robert Alfred
Capt. Midnight, Francis Barnes
Capt. Moore, Larry Albert
1st Lt. Pazdan, Dennis Sigmund
Capt. Reeves, Robert Linton
1st Lt. Richter, Karl Wendell
Maj. Rickel, David J.
Capt. Risher, David Horace
Capt. Salzarulo, Raymond Paul Jr.
1st Lt. Spangler, James Nelson
Capt. Trent, Alan Robert
Maj. White, James Blair
Mr. Williams, David Beryl
Capt. (USMC) Francis L. Zavacki

1965

Capt. Adams, Stanley Lee
2nd Lt. Bonnell, George Harrison III
Capt. Callies, Tommy Leon
Maj. Crew, James Alan
Capt. Daffron, Thomas Carl
Capt. Davenport, Robert Dean
Capt. Hackett, Harley Benjamin III
Maj. Hesford, Peter Dean
Lt. Col. Hopper, Earl Pearson Jr.
1st Lt. Johnson, Theodore Wesley
Capt. Keller, George Richard
Capt. Lucki, Albin Earl
Capt. Melnick, Steven Bernard
Capt. Newendorp, James Vernon
Capt. Raymond, Paul Darwin
Capt. Sijan, Lance Peter
Capt. Smith, Victor Arlon
Capt. Warren, Gray Dawson
Capt. Wood, James Watson

1966

Capt. Brunner, Gary Edward
 Capt. Bush, John Robert
 Capt. Cheeseman, Alan Browne
 Capt. Crist, Kenneth Roy
 Capt. Estrada, Carlos Alberto Jr.
 Maj. Gourley, Laurent Lee
 Maj. Hess, Frederick William Jr.
 Capt. Mravak, Thomas Anthony
 Capt. Orlowski, Joseph Michael
 Capt. Ross, Joseph Shaw
 Capt. Setterquist, Francis Leslie
 Capt. Spitz, George Ross
 Capt. Vincent, Halton Ramsey

1967

Maj. Albright, John Scott II
 Maj. Bosiljevac, Michael Joseph
 Capt. Chorlins, Richard David
 Capt. Davis, Daniel Richard
 Maj. Donahue, Morgan Jefferson
 Capt. Ferguson, Douglas David
 1st Lt. Gilmore, James Robson Jr.
 1st Lt. Henderson, Hal Kent
 Capt. Henry, George Donald Jr.
 Capt. Hoskins, Charles Lee
 Capt. James, Samuel Larry
 Mr. Kruzel, Joseph John Jr.
 1st Lt. Moore, Donald Robert Jr.
 Maj. Pugh, Dennis Gerard
 1st Lt. Rosen, Max Emmanuel
 Maj. Shay, Donald Emerson Jr.
 Capt. Smith, James Leonard
 Capt. Steadman, James Eugene
 1st Lt. Svanoe, Kennard Errol

1968

1st Lt. Caudill, Elmon Cleveland II
 Capt. Duffy, John Everett
 1st Lt. Fehrenbach, Theron Carl II
 Capt. Hallenbeck, Ted Brian
 Capt. Jackson, Paul Vernon III
 1st Lt. Kollenberg, Charles Louis
 Capt. Ryder, John Leslie
 Mr. Sawyer, Wallace Blaine Jr.
 Capt. Sigafos, Walter Harrison III
 1st Lt. Uhls, Willis Grant
 1st Lt. Voris, Russell Earl

1969

Capt. Bond, Ronald Leslie

1st Lt. Kamenicky, George Wayne
 Capt. Kohn, Robert Alan
 Capt. Lockhart, George Barry
 Capt. Martin, Douglas Kent
 Capt. Paul, Craig Allan
 1st Lt. Ryan, Robert Edward
 1st Lt. Rydlewicz, John Michael
 Capt. Tousley, George Henry III

1970

1st Lt. Blassie, Michael Joseph
 1st Lt. Christy, Richard Neil II
 1st Lt. Gravrock, Stephen Howard
 Capt. Hardy, Arthur Hans
 1st Lt. Hargrove, William Stone
 1st Lt. Haselton, John Herbert
 Capt. Rovito, Gilbert Allan
 Capt. Townsend, Francis Wayne
 1st Lt. Turose, Michael Stephen

1971

1st Lt. Gray, Richard Tenney
 Capt. Kays, James Grier
 Capt. Peterson, Mark Allan

1972

1st Lt. Froehlich, Laurence Eugene

1973

Capt. McMillan, Charles Thomas II

1974

Col Jones, Charles Edward

1976

Maj. Hook, Peter Samuel
 Col. (Ret.) Butler, Michael W.

1979

Maj. Weaver, Paul Jennings

1982

Capt. Phillis, Stephen Richard

1985

Capt. McCarthy, Mark Patrick

1986

Capt. Hawkens, David Andrew
 Capt. Olson, Jeffrey Jon

1987

Maj. Homer, Leroy Wilton Jr.
 Capt. Olson, Patrick Brian

1989

Lt. Col. Shea, Kevin Michael

1992

1st Lt. Piper, Laura Ashley
 Maj. Plumhoff, Steven

1995

Lt. Col. Bryant, Frank Diehl Jr.
 Capt. Das, Eric Bruce

1998

Maj. Rodriguez, Rodolfo Ivan

1999

Maj. Brodeur, David Lawrence

2001

Capt. Argel, Derek Mears
 Capt. Fresques, Jeremy Jeff

2002

Capt. Wisniewski, David Anthony

2005

Capt. McDowell, Mark Russell

2006

1st Lt. Schulte, Roslyn Littmann
 Capt. Steel, James Michael

2007

Lt. Helton, Joseph Dennis Jr.

2008

Capt. Pinckney, Victoria Ann
 Capt. Voss, Mark T.
 Capt. (Lissy) Lyon, David I.

2009

1st Lt. Wilkens, Justin James

2015

Capt. Roland, M.D.
 Capt. Pierson, J.B.
 Maj. Vorderbruggen, A.M.