

CEO Update

A Time for Reflection and Appreciation

BY WILLIAM "T" THOMPSON, '73
AOG PRESIDENT AND CEO



The holiday season is upon us and, with it, the hustle and bustle of decorating, shopping, traveling and, in my case, eating too much. Winter has arrived in Colorado and has brought its spectacular snow capped mountains and crystal clear blue skies. The Cadet Area sits majestically in view from Doolittle Hall and encourages reflection on the days when we walked the halls of our dorms and spent endless hours in Fairchild.

While we were all proud to receive our appointments to the Academy, many of us failed to truly understand the tremendous opportunity we had been given. It is common though, as the years pass, for grads to reflect on our Academy experience and express a true appreciation for what the institution has given us and how it has shaped our lives. These are the reasons that many grads choose to reconnect with the Academy, often through the activities of the AOG.

Over the past year, your Association has continued to advance its support of the Academy and the graduate community while making internal improvements as well. As we come to the end of another year, it's appropriate to reflect on some of the more significant accomplishments of your AOG.

We began the year by implementing the AOG's Operations Strategic Plan 2015. It is a detailed document that identifies our Five Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs) and lays out the specific route we will take to achieve our success. Unlike some plans which gather dust on a shelf, we are using this document as a GPS to take us directly to where we need to be. It is on the AOG web site and I invite you to read it and follow our progress.

Member Engagement is our first SFA and is an outgrowth of The Connection Project. You may have seen the Connection video or read the paper, both of which are on the AOG web site. The AOG Chapter Program is the capstone component of Member Engagement and we have been flying along at max throttle in its implementation. Since putting our chapter development program in place, we have grown from 31 to 65 chapters worldwide. While this growth has been dramatic, we are not focused on growth alone. Our primary interest is in establishing vibrant, sustainable chapters as the foundation for graduate connection to the Academy, and with each other.

To promote strong chapter sustainability, we held the first Chapter Presidents Conference under the new program at Doolittle Hall this fall. Twenty-five chapters were represented and enjoyed networking opportunities with Parents' Club Presidents, the Superintendent and his senior staff, and AOG leadership and staff. At the closing luncheon, five chapters were recognized for their superior accomplishments by receiving the Distinguished Chapter Award. Recipients included: New England, Washington, D.C., North Texas, Rampart and Las Vegas. We are very proud of their achievements and hope to congratulate many other chapters in the coming years.

We have also made a concerted effort to provide more social and networking opportunities for our grads, both locally and around the country. Our largest concentration of graduates is in the Washington, D.C. area with approximately 3,500. The Front Range of Colorado is second with approximately 3,400

graduates. In conjunction with the Navy football game we sponsored a tailgate that was attended by over 1,000 folks. Along with Bethany and Joey Plank, '03, and Alex Granados, '04, we also sponsored a golf outing at the Army Navy Country Club and worked with the Endowment to do a donor appreciation dinner at the same venue. Back in Colorado, we held both wine tasting and Scotch tasting events at Doolittle Hall and an AF-Notre Dame Game Watch at the Denver Athletic Club. We also sponsored a well attended AOG night with the Colorado Rockies. The AOG also held a tailgate at Boise State and a well attended Fan Fest at New Mexico this past season. We sponsored a golf outing at the SeaCliff Country Club in Southern California and assisted the Endowment with a golf outing and dinner in Chicago. All of these events have given our members the opportunity to get together, connect or re-connect, socialize, network, and just enjoy being in the company of fellow Air Force Academy graduates.

Communications is also one of our five SFAs and your new AOG web site is one of the key components in achieving this area's success. We also rolled out the latest newsletter, '7258', to better keep you informed about the happenings at the AOG. You may have also noticed increased visibility and use of social media including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and our own ZoomieNation. These communication tools will continue to grow in popularity with our graduates and we are committed to staying ahead of the curve in providing these services to you.

Your AOG has accomplished a great deal more over the past year, much of which has been chronicled in *Checkpoints*, *ZoomiEnews*, and *7258*. Examples include:

- Working with the Academy to establish the new AOG Alumni Base Access Badge which will now give our non-retiree graduate members access to their alma mater.
- Establishing the Long Blue Line Endowment to address the AOG's long term financial sustainability, another SFA. Patterned after the Long Gray Line Endowment at West Point, it has been included as one of the Superintendent's priority items.
- Electing four outstanding new Board Members and passing the revisions to the By-laws.
- Combining the 40-year class Graduate Legacy Program and the 50-year class Graduation Program into one seamless legacy program for the Cadet Wing.
- Establishing the Heritage Trail Policy and the Heritage Preservation Fund to insure that the grounds at Doolittle are developed and maintained in superior fashion.

- Sponsoring the special screening for the Cadet Wing and Academy staff of the upcoming George Lucas film, *Red Tails*, which chronicles the exploits of the famed Tuskegee Airmen ...
- And the list goes on.

Yet as we reflect on our many accomplishments, we are also mindful of, and thankful for, the many blessings that we enjoy:

- A strong and vibrant Academy that continues to excel: the Academy's Rhodes and Marshall Scholars have just been announced, as well as our football team's fifth consecutive bowl game selection.
- A reconnected graduate community and growing membership base; almost 1,200 new members in the past five months.
- A dynamic Association served by a dedicated and professional staff that is committed to serving you and the institution that has given us all so much.
- Our families, friends and circumstances; no matter what they are, we are better off than most other people in the world ...

And the list goes on.

In closing, I wish each and every one of you a happy and safe holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year. ▣



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