

The AOG Unveils 50th Class Reunion Award

The AOG Board of Directors, at the recommendation of the Distinguished Graduate Award Committee, has established the 50th Class Reunion Award. Each class, on the occasion of its 50th reunion, will honor a classmate who has demonstrated a lifetime of commitment to Core Values. Under broad guidelines that have been established by the AOG, the recipient will be chosen by any selection process that the class finds appropriate; this will ensure the widespread involvement and support of the class.

The creation of the 50th Class Reunion Award is the next step toward developing a series of awards that will recognize the achievements of graduates spanning various stages in their lives. The Distinguished Graduate award recognizes a lifetime of service to the Academy, the Air Force and/or the nation. The 50th Class Reunion Award recognizes the person in the class who, during the last half century, has set him or herself apart through extraordinary contributions to the class collectively, classmates individually, and to their communities and/or the graduate community at large.

The award winner is honored with a distinctive medal. Our hope is that the recipient will wear this medal at formal Academy events, which will allow others to honor his or her service. In addition, 50th Class Reunion Award winners will have their names placed on a plaque that will be displayed at Doolittle Hall in perpetuity.

The Classes of 1959 and 1960, who have already celebrated their 50th reunions, will present this award at a date and place of their choosing; this makes the Class of 1961 the inaugural presenter.

Brice Jones, '61, Awarded Inaugural 50TH Class Reunion Award

On November 4, 2011, Brice Jones was awarded the inaugural 50th Class Reunion Award during a presentation at the Class of 1961's 50th reunion banquet. In July, a selection committee sent out a call for nominations. From the Class' response, two nominees were selected and Jones was chosen as the award recipient after winning a class vote.

As lives go, it's hard to imagine many that have been more varied, nuanced and fulfilling than the one Brice Jones has led over the past 50 years.

Combat pilot, businessman, philanthropist, and class leader are just a few of the titles that define the person and the life. Jones was introduced by Class President Tom Eller, '61, who espoused the virtues of a man who has been "a driving force in the creation and growth of the U. S. Air Force Academy traditions of integrity, service, excellence, class unity, esprit de corps and the enduring 'Long Blue Line.'"

As a combat pilot in Vietnam, Jones earned a Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star and 14 Air Medals over the course of two voluntary tours. Throughout his first tour in 1964, Jones flew A1Es with the 1st Air Commando Squadron. During his second tour he was selected to be 7th Air Force Chief of A1E Combat Tactics.





Brice Jones is congratulated on winning the inaugural 50th Class Reunion Award. From left: Class President Tom Eller, '61, Brice Jones, '61, AOG Board Chair Terry Storm, '61.

After the war, Jones went to Harvard where he graduated with an MBA. In 1973 he would establish Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards. Jones would go on to create some of the most decorated wine in the country. *Wine & Spirits* magazine's annual poll of "The Most Asked-For" wines in America's 3500 Zagat-rated restaurants named Sonoma-Cutrer the number one chardonnay in all but two years since 1988. In 1999 Jones would

successfully negotiate the sale of the company. In the years that followed, Brice and key management would continue their success in the vineyards by developing a noble pinot noir that has become one of America's most popular.

Over the past half-century Jones has also forged a legacy of philanthropy. Since 1985, annual charity events that he helped initiate have raised millions for the Make a Wish Foundation and other charitable organizations. Furthermore, his impact on the Academy will be lasting. Jones' efforts include providing funds for multiple class projects, leading fundraising efforts for the Class of 1961 50th Anniversary gift to the Academy, establishing and endowing the annual Roger Stringer Award for Excellence in Intercollegiate Debate, and actively participating in AOG activities that promote awareness of graduate heritage among alumni and cadets. His latest efforts have helped introduce the participation of the 50-year Classes of '59, '60 and '61 in the graduation ceremonies of the Classes of 2009, 2010 and 2011, which includes the presentation of the first set of 2nd lieutenant gold bars at commissioning ceremonies.

These are just a few of the achievements of a man who stands out among the honored and accomplished Class of '61. In short, Jones embodies all that is expected of a truly great Academy grad. There could not be a finer selection to win the inaugural 50th Class Reunion Award. ✓

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