



September 2019

TWIN CITIES AREA ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES

# The Northern Zoomie



## Inside

Outgoing and Incoming Prez Prose

Big Thanks to Sandy Carlson

ALO Update - Class of 2024

Helping Hands

Web Person Needed

## Prez Prose

### Tom Wilson, President Emeritus

Greetings from Stillwater. It seems forever ago that I have seen any of you. The COVID-19 Pandemic has truly affected all our lives. Hopefully, there will be a vaccine soon so we all can get back to a near “normal.”

My “normal” has clearly changed, as many of you know. My Bride of 58+ years passed away on 27 December 2019 primarily due to complications from Parkinson’s Disease and Atrial Fibrillation. A “Celebration of Life” Mass was held in Stillwater on 3 January 2020 and we are planning a Memorial Service on 16 July at the USAFA Cemetery.

Judy will always be remembered for her smile, her laughter, and her friendship to those who were lucky enough to be a part of her life. I know I was blessed to have known and loved her for over 60 years of our courtship and marriage.

If there is anything positive to be said about the “home quarantine” of this virus, it did give me ample time to write my memoirs of our life together. My children have been after me for years to do this as a family history. I only regret that Judy will not be able to correct any

comments or events that I put on paper. Judy had a much better memory than I do, thus would be able to correct some of my entries. On the plus side, however, what I wrote will stand. This time I won't have to answer her with my usual last words: "Yes, Dear." (Note: For you guys reading this, you might remember those words. It worked for me throughout our 58+ years of marriage!)

I am delighted that the Chapter has a new slate of Officers and Directors. It's time for these younger grads to take the lead and guide the Chapter deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Elsewhere in this Newsletter, you will find the "TCA AOG Key Personnel Roster." I am confident that the membership will support these grads just as you have since we founded the Chapter on 18 May 2011. I am truly proud of our accomplishments to date and expect the same in the future. We all should be proud of the reputation we have earned across the country and the recognition by the National AOG as a "Distinguished Chapter" every year of our existence. Kudos to all of us!

This Chapter has been a major part of my life since it began. It will remain so until I reach a point when I can no longer be physically able to attend meetings and social gatherings. I encourage all grads to participate in the Chapter events. We are a very large fraternity of Brothers and Sisters that share a rich and fruitful history of our schooling and Military Service. Please continue to make our Chapter one of – if not the best – Chapter in the National AOG program.

I sincerely look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at future Chapter events.

Godspeed to all of us.

Tom Wilson, '61

## Prez Prose

### Jason VanOverbeke, President

First and foremost, I'd like to extend my gratitude to Tom and Rick for their hard work and dedication as board members and presidents of the board. Both have done an outstanding job creating, developing and growing our membership and enabling the TCAAOG to be one of the most successful chapters in the country. We are all grateful for the organization you've helped to foster.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of our lives, including the TCAAOG. We've been disappointed not to be able to gather in person for important events like the Heritage dinner and our board meetings, but it has also proven that through the challenge of distance, we can still forge along and maintain continuity. We will resume in-person board meetings going forward, and we will appropriately toast to Tom and Rick.

As we look toward the future, a goal I have for this organization is to further develop membership and increase engagement of graduates beyond our current scope. In order for us to advance participation and engagement, we need to know what members want to see from our group; we want to gauge interest, whether it be community service, mentoring, social, historical/documentation, etc. Measuring our membership's interest will help shape the direction of our organization where members will be most fulfilled. With that in mind, in the coming weeks, the Board will be putting together a short survey on this topic. Additionally, I may be reaching out to some of you with the same goal in mind. I recognize there are a lot of demands on everyone's time, and it is valuable, so I want to find out what sort of activities and events will peak your interest and participation.

If at any point, you have suggestions, questions or comments, always feel free to reach out.

Jason Vanoverbeke '03

## **BIG THANK YOU!!**

The board would like to give a big "THANKS" to Sandy Carlson as she steps down from the board. Through her tireless efforts to improve and manage these events, our last several Heritage/Founders Day Dinners have been extremely successful.

Each of these dinners required an immense amount of personal effort and attention to detail. She was lauded by attendees and speakers each time. Thanks to Sandy's careful handling of costs and charges the chapter is more than solvent for the second time in its history.

Sandy was a valuable member of the chapter and board during her tenure. She represented the chapter with the Minnesota Parents club and organized many social events for our membership. She always came prepared to the board meetings and had valuable contributions every time.

We look forward to seeing Sandy and John at future events. Next time you see them, please take the time to thank them both personally for their contributions.

## ALO Program Update – July 2020

Good day to all MN USAFA graduates! I hope all is well in the land of 10,000 lakes...and Corona. It's been a while since I wrote last, so here is an update.

When I wrote you last there were 24 ALOs on our team spreading the word of USAFA and ROTC as a commissioning source and post-secondary education option. Since then we've had some changes both within the program and to our size. We now have 34 Admission Liaison Officers (ALO) serving in MN, comprised of both USAFA and ROTC graduates. In regards to changes with the application program, the ALO structure has undergone some unique changes with the biggest being how we conduct interviews for candidates. The new method for conducting interviews – which coincidentally goes well with the Corona-virus life – has been to conduct virtual interviews (Skype, Facetime, Zoom, etc.) with candidates that ALOs have not met before. This was done to minimize bias, but mainly to spread out the workload across the ALO force. Some areas were inundated with candidate interview requests, but had little staff to make things happen in a timely fashion. As with everything AF, we're looking for ways to improve and virtual interviews was the answer needed. It seems to be working well, and this will be the direction going forward. Don't worry, MN ALOs still do outreach and mentoring to MN students...we just don't interview and evaluate our mentees.

We attracted 148 candidates during the admissions cycle – a 10% improvement over the previous year – and ended with 27 Appointment offers. The hard work of ALOs across the state helped generate the increased interest. Our Appointment offers fell within our long term average range, but did not quite reach the outstanding number of 31 in the previous cycle. That being said, our acceptance rate was higher this cycle, so we think the candidates are getting a clearer picture early on in the application cycle of what the Academy is about, and what the AF has to offer those that want to serve their country. The class of 2024 has in-processed, and started BCT with a modified format due to the Corona-virus. We also had two students accept Prep School and one Falcon Foundation scholarship recipient.

ALOs supported a multitude of outreach events in the past year including Congressional Academy Nights, Congressional panels, air shows (Duluth and Eden Prairie), Women in Aviation event, and even a Naval cadet forum. Of course, we are grateful for your all's support. Support through hiccups in the pay system, official travel, and outreach to low engagement areas help us ensure greater awareness of USAFA/ROTC. Most of our state's top-notch students have heard of Harvard and Stanford, but only an informed few are familiar with USAFA or service academies in general. By growing the MN ALO team, we seek to increase the USAFA presence in the state and engage with more high-achieving

students who are interested in serving their country. Now the challenge will be to figure out the best way to reach students if we aren't able to physically meet them.

Thank you for your interest in the MN ALO team. We appreciate the support of the TCAAOG which makes us more effective reaching MN students with the USAFA/ROTC message. We welcome the opportunity to continue to partner with the TCAAOG!

Lt Col Bill Fields, Class of 1999

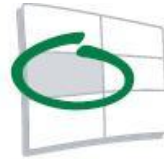
## Helping Hands

Attention in the area, attention in the area, we are looking for grads who need some extra help in this season of stress. If you know of someone we might help please contact Rick Knoll at 612-518-3737 or rickknoll@msn.com.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY "IT" BACKGROUND?

Bob Hickcox relocated to North Carolina in January of this year and is settling in despite the Covid disruption. He is still helping with our website, Newsletter, etc., but his new AOG chapter needs his services so we need to replace him soon. We are in search of a new WebPerson to keep our two websites up to date and humming smoothly. This work is typically 2-3 hours a month, with a guaranteed hour a few days before our monthly board meeting, and the other time spread out over the month, usually in 30 minute to 1 hour increments. The work consists of editing existing web pages to update or replace text and picture content, adding new pages (usually events) to both the website and facebook group page, updating web software (very easy), and deleting new members of our employment website, who are not Academy graduates (usually known spammers), also easy. The ideal candidate would be someone who breathes, has operated a personal computer from time to time, and is willing to learn something new. While helpful, knowing HTML is not really required, as most of the website editing is done in an easy to use editor. Our websites are implemented in WordPress, using the Divi theme and a visual editor, so if you understand Microsoft Word, or something similar, and have used some of the intermediate features, you will probably be able to pick this up. You will have support from Dave Carpentier, who handles the more technical aspects of the website, such as hosting and backups. And Bob Hickcox ( [robert@hickcox.org](mailto:robert@hickcox.org) or 952-738-2318 ) will provide an orientation and as much training as you need to get going. He is also willing to answer questions and do all of this via Zoom while you learn.

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## TCA AOG Key Personnel Roster

Twin Cities Area Chapter - USAFA Association of Graduates June 2019

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