Class of ‘57 Gifts to USMA

Over the past 50 years, appropriated fund support for West Point has been strong but far from sufficient to provide the Military Academy the facility and cadet support dollars needed to provide the high quality programs that we experienced and that today are found in the top universities across the nation. A quick drive through the Academy grounds today would point out how much graduates have risen to the occasion in terms of supporting our Alma Mater. New athletic facilities in support of clubs, intramural and varsity athletics have been built at many locations. Other facilities such as the Thayer Gate, and Thayer Walk (in which we participated) support the installation as a whole as well as cadets. Not seen, but equally important are the significant programs that are now funded by gifts from graduates, classes and friends of West Point. When Barry McCaffrey, on NBC, identifies himself as a professor at West Point, he is referring to an endowed academic chair. SCUSA, the Glee Club and countless extracurricular activities are funded by graduate gifts. The effective summer training program for cadets that lets selected cadets travel overseas to build on their language skills, is funded in large part by gifts. And, the same thing is happening at the Naval and the Air Force Academies.

Classes continue to donate increasingly large amounts to the Academy. Since 1994, even the graduating classes are building gift funds so that they will be able to contribute early in their careers. For example, about 80% of the Class of 2002 agreed to make allotments to AOG for 5 years to build a $50,000 gift fund. The participation of graduating classes has ranged from 55% to 80%.

’57, like other classes, has made both small and large gifts at reunions before the 50th, and we chose to come back again at the 50th with another significant gift. While the amount contributed by classes varies –some classes have many millionaires – the common theme is continuing efforts to make West Point better. In support of this theme we have donated five reunion gifts, the Cemetery Memorial Fountain (10th), the ’57 Corridor in the Gym (30th), the tree near the home of the Cadet Hostess (the home of Marty Maher in the movie) (40th), the Honor Plaza and Thayer Walk (45th), and now the enhancement of the new Cadet Library and the establishment of a maintenance endowment for our prior gifts. We have also provided the Class of ’07, our 50-year affiliation class, with a Class Flag and will give them their first set of Lieutenant’s bars, appropriately inscribed, at their commissioning. In all, we will have donated approximately $1.75 M as a class, about 95% of that at the 45th and 50th reunions. For every gift the entire Class was given the opportunity to vote on the form and value of the gift, and all votes were overwhelmingly in favor of the selected gifts. It should be noted that individual Class members and relations of classmates have also made substantial gifts to USMA in the name of both the Class and individual classmates, to enhance the cadet experience and reward cadet performance, but they will not be covered here. You may be surprised to learn that the government funded the AOG and USMA (not sure exactly how) to make and install 176 stained glass windows in the Cadet Chapel, in a project that ran from 1910 to 1976. All Classes from 1802 to 1976 have windows in their honor, and, as you can see, the Class of 1957 window is really quite beautiful. The cost per window remained a constant $8000 per window throughout the contract, which was completed in 1976.
GIFTS TO USMA PRIOR TO OUR 50TH REUNION

- In 1967, the Class donated a black granite fountain with a bench at the entrance to the Post Cemetery. Twenty years later the benches needed repair and '57 funded the repair. At one time, the fountain stopped working, and our own John Loberg personally repaired it. Recently, during the Marchback with the Cl of ’07, classmates demonstrated the value of the Fountain.

- In 1987, the class provided funding to upgrade the appearance of the central entrance to the Cadet Gymnasium, to include paneling, display cabinets and pictures, and the refurbishment of some paintings. The corridor was ‘out of business’ during the rehab of Arvin Gym, but the area we enhanced was sealed and protected by the contractor, and is now fully restored. It provides access for cadets to the two large weight training rooms that replaced the first floor boxing rooms that we remember so well. The outside entrance to the hallway looks the same as it did before, but the '57 Arch area is all new.
In 1997, knowing that we were working towards a major gift at the 45th, which was also the Bicentennial Year for WP, the Class offered to plant a tree, complete with plaque. USMA accepted our offer and the tree, a Black Tupelo, was planted in front of the Cadet Hostess’ Quarters. As you should know, Carolyn Gaspard was the Cadet Hostess from April 1984 until February 2000. The tree photo was taken during the 45th reunion.

Negotiations leading to the gift for the 45th, which we dedicated in 2002, were conducted over a five year period and the result was certainly worth the effort. The Class was fortunate in having John Stokes doing much of the negotiation, Carl Vuono chairing the fund raising and working with USMA to secure the best possible location, Jack Adams providing a very talented architect, and Len Marrella chairing the selection committee for the quotations on the Honor Plaza. The gift actually supported two purposes. It supported the 4-class improvement of Thayer Road ($750K) and the construction of the Honor Plaza at the north end of Thayer Road (~$260K). The plaque for Thayer Road is shown below.
• The Honor Plaza, has taken on special significance within the Corps both as a monument to the Honor Code and as a location proudly shown by cadets to their visitors. The Plaza is frequently used as the ideal location to discuss with official foreign visitors the honor code. The Honor Plaza is also dedicated to the memory of our combat losses in Viet Nam, and the names of the 12 classmates who died in that war are on a plaque at the Thayer Road entrance. You can be very proud that the Class of ’57 has made Honor the centerpiece of our Bicentennial and 45th reunion gift to USMA.

The Center Section of the Honor Plaza Wall

Honor Plaza Memorial Plaque

• At our 45th reunion the Class agreed to develop an affiliation with the CI of ’07, funding and presenting that Class with it’s official flag and the Lieutenant’s bars at their commissioning. The flag was presented in a ceremony at Camp Buckner in 2004 by Ed Soyster.

Ed Soyster presents Class of 2007 Flag at Camp Buckner

The New Cadet Library (Jefferson Hall) and the Class 50th Reunion Gift

On 24 June 2006, Academy Officials broke ground for construction of the new Cadet Library, Jefferson Hall (Figure 1), which will be located on the current site of Patton’s Statue and the Library Tennis Courts. On completion of the new Library in 2007, the “old” Library (completed in 1964) will be used for archives and special collections and other academic purposes.
To ensure that the Library construction and support will meet the highest standards, the Academy sought class gifts to provide the margin of excellence in the construction and outfitting of the Library. Recent increases in the price of steel and cement coupled with a Congressional cap on Library costs made our gift all the more important.

The Class gift provides funds for the Library to use for needed equipment, higher quality finishes in important areas of the building, and to develop an Honor Kiosk within the Library. In return, the Class will be recognized by appropriate plaques and crests and explanatory information at the Honor Kiosk and at the “Boodler” on the main floor of the Library. The following paragraphs and figures describe the Class 50th Reunion gift in more detail.

An Honor Kiosk

The Kiosk will chronicle the history and relevance of the Honor Code (Figure 2). The centerpiece of the new Library will be a spiral staircase to all floors. (Figure 3). The Kiosk would be located on the third floor as indicated in Figure 4. The first floor is offices and small classrooms. The circulation desk is on the second floor, and the third floor contains reading rooms, stacks, and some study rooms. At the center of the Kiosk would be a high quality monitor showing the history of the Honor Code and the role of honor in contemporary military and civilian society. The Center for the Study of the Professional Military Ethic (at USMA) is underwriting the preparation of a history that could be used as the foundation for the media presentation. The Kiosk would also include display shelves for artifacts about honor (e.g. a signed copy of Macarthur’s “Duty, Honor, Country” speech, notes from graduates about honor, including Len Marrella’s manuscript, etc.)
The Coffee Bar

The Academy is going to establish a coffee bar at the main (north) entrance to Jefferson Hall - sort of a mini Grant Hall boodlers. The concept springs from the presence of coffee bars at Borders and Barnes and Noble Book stores and was suggested by the cadets. It will be operated by Cadet Activities and will be available to cadets and faculty.

The $650,000 class gift has provided a significant direct contribution to the new Library, to include supervision and administration of the gift, the costs associated with building and furnishing the kiosk as well as the purchase and installation of the multi-media equipment and the development of the first story line and creation of a technology update, and Class recognition (e.g. a Class of ’57 crest on the coffee bar wall.) The Academy will furnish the coffee bar at government expense. We have been assured by the Academy, that should the coffee bar ever be changed to another use, a comparable section of the Library would be set aside to recognize the Class. The gift will also include funds for a maintenance endowment to support the gifts the class has already given to the academy.

You can be proud that we have served our country not only with our own lives, but that we have served it by providing the proper environment for the training of future leaders of our Army and our country.