

**The Association of Graduates
United States Military Academy
1970—1990**

Two Decades of Change



**Colonel Robert J. Lamb, Jr., USA Ret.
Class of 1946**

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By

**Robert J. Lamb '46
Secretary-Treasurer, AOG 1970-1972
Executive Vice President 1972-1990**

FOREWORD

After serving the Military Academy and its graduates for twenty years - the first two as the active duty Alumni Secretary for the Academy and Secretary/Treasurer of its Association of Graduates, and the last eighteen as the civilian Executive Vice President of the Association - I felt an obligation and a desire to write this organizational history of the Association for the period of that service, 1970-1990. It is, in a sense, an "after-action" report, written from the perspective of one who felt a responsibility to assist in the development of Association policy, but who was primarily responsible for its execution.

A few persons agreed to review drafts of this report as I developed it. Readers will see, I believe, that Generals Paul W. Thompson '29 and Michael S. Davison '39 were two of those persons. Also, Colonels Michael J. Krisman '39, Richard L. Gruenther '46 and Morris J. Herbert '50 provided valuable corrections to and comments on early drafts. Finally, Miss Jean A. Hoey, the Association's Administrative Assistant throughout the period of the report, contributed from her concern for the Academy and her institutional memory, and Major Robert J. Lamb III '78 gave it the "young grad" review and its cover.

The file copy of this report is being sent to the Executive Vice President of the Association of Graduates for such use as the Association may desire to make of it.

Highland Falls, New York
April 1992

Charles:

With professional and personal regards of the highest order. Working with you during this period is one of my most rewarding memories.

Bob

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the early 1970's as the United States and our Army moved into the final years of what had become an unpopular war West Point was in the midst of profound and significant change. The expansion of the Corps of Cadets to its 4400-cadet strength, the accompanying increase in the size of the staff and faculty, the historic additions to and modernization of the physical plant - all were nearing completion. Actions to fully integrate racial minorities into the Corps were in progress, the interest of young Americans in gaining admission to the Academy was at a low point and the fall of 1973 saw the Army football team win not a single game!

As the Academy was undergoing historic change, three unrelated events occurred in early 1970 which were to prove to be independent catalysts to providing graduate assistance to the Academy. Within a single three month period a new Superintendent arrived at West Point and a new President of the Association of Graduates (AOG) was elected; the AOG received a large bequest for unrestricted use, which the Board of Trustees decided to add to the AOG Endowment Fund, thus quadrupling its size; and the Academy announced an ill-fated private fund raising appeal.

The replacement of Samuel W. Koster '42 with William A. Knowlton January '43 as Superintendent brought to the Academy a graduate who demonstrated a clear understanding of the special role of an alumni organization in support of a government institution and a true "college president's" insight into ways of garnering and using that support. At the same time, in a normal succession, Clyde D. Eddleman '24, a highly respected senior retired military officer, turned over the presidency of the AOG to Paul W. Thompson '29, whose promising military career had ended with wounds on D-Day 1945 in Normandy and who subsequently distinguished himself in the publishing business.

The bequest of \$1.5 million, a gift of Leah and Clement Trott Class of 1899, was in a real sense a complement to the gift of George W. Cullum Class of 1834 some 75 years earlier. The Trott gift gave the AOG the financial flexibility and capability to expand program and activity support of the Academy, as the Cullum gift had provided graduates their administrative center and "alumni house" at West Point.

Finally, in March 1970, the Superintendent, Koster, announced a major private fund raising activity with a goal of \$10 million to endow the cadet activities program. While the intent should have been to conduct the fund raising activity under the aegis of the West Point Alumni Foundation (WPAF), a private organization then having responsibility for such fund raising on behalf of the Academy, the initiative appeared to be a plan for the solicitation of private funds by government personnel, which would have been a highly questionable activity, and it had not been coordinated with either the WPAF or the AOG, the cooperation and endorsement of both of which would have been essential to a successful effort. This doubly adverse combination of perception and reality, together with the unexpected change of Superintendents just over a month later, in effect killed the announced fund raising initiative and became a significant influence on subsequent decisions regarding alumni related missions and organizations, decisions which would place the AOG in a posture to provide improved and expanded support to the Academy.

In order to understand the reorganization and redirection of alumni affairs which began under the joint leadership of General Thompson and General Knowlton, it will be helpful to know how the Academy's alumni affairs were managed as they assumed their responsibilities in the spring of 1970. What organizations were involved? How were they managed? What were they doing? Who were the chief players? What were the indicators pointing toward change?

There were really two separate private organizations which, along with the Academy staff, were performing the Academy's alumni functions. One, the AOG, had been organized in 1869 as a fraternal and social organization with Sylvanus Thayer as its first president. Almost all graduates were (and are) members of the AOG, which had a relatively large governing Board of Trustees, a paid staff and offices in Cullum Hall. The other organization, the WPAF, had been organized in 1946 to perform certain alumni related activities, primarily the solicitation of commercial advertising for the Register of Graduates, which the AOG could not perform at that time as a consequence of the presence of an active duty officer on its staff. The WPAF had a relatively small governing board, no members other than its Board, a paid staff and offices in Cullum Hall.

There was another, major difference between the two organizations, a difference which was a primary reason for the creation of the WPAF in 1946 and which, unless eliminated, would preclude any realignment of functions between the two organizations. That difference was in the

composition of the two staffs. While the WPAF had a completely civilian (or retired military) staff, the AOG had, in addition to civilians, two government-paid staff members, one of whom was an active duty officer and Secretary-Treasurer of the AOG. In his active duty role he was Alumni Secretary on the Academy staff. The difference, the presence of an active duty officer serving on the AOG staff, prevented the AOG from soliciting private funds for the Academy and from soliciting commercial advertising for alumni publications. This circumstance, caused by the AOG'S financial situation, was to be changed by the receipt of the proceeds of the Trott bequest.

Thus, in the early 1970's the two organizations functioned together in Cullum Hall, each with separate governing boards and staffs. The WPAF, acting through its fund raising committee, conducted a relatively low-key private fund raising program for the Academy and served as publisher of the two alumni publications, Assembly magazine and the Register of Graduates, including the solicitation of advertising for the Register. The AOG was responsible for conducting alumni events, such as class reunions, operated a catalogue gift shop, maintained historical and biographical records on graduates, provided limited services to its members and exercised editorial responsibility for Assembly.

Except for making arrangements for class reunions and administering the Thayer Award Program, under which the Academy and the AOG recognize a distinguished American each year, clearly the most visible alumni function was the publication of Assembly and the Register of Graduates. However, from the spring of 1970 onward the fund raising activity assumed markedly increased importance. How these two functions, fund raising and publishing, were managed then was a central issue in the reorganization planning as it developed over the next two years.

The history of the Academy's acceptance of gifts is long, probably predating Cullum's gift of a "Memorial Building" in the 1890's. The history of an active program of soliciting gifts for the Academy, however, is relatively short and began under the superintendency of William C. Westmoreland '36 and under the alumni leadership of Lucius D. Clay June '18 in the early '60's. This solicitation activity was created and operated under the WPAF charter as a program under which donors of means made relatively substantial gifts to the "West Point Fund." This fund, originally called the "Superintendent's Fund," consisted of private funds donated for projects and activities for the Academy, not the AOG. Significantly, the solicitations were made by members of the West Point Fund Committee, the WPAF

committee appointed to solicit the private funds, with no fund raising staff. The committee's primary contact at West Point was the USMA Gifts Officer, who was an active duty officer on the Superintendent's staff and who had no responsibility to either the AOG or the WPAF. He provided the committee with administrative support and guidance concerning the projects to be funded. The staff of the WPAF managed the funds raised, including their investment, custody and disbursement.

In addition to this WPAF fund raising activity for the Academy, the AOG, also acting with a committee of graduates rather than with a fund raising staff, conducted an annual appeal to all of its members for supplemental AOG operating funds. Both activities, one under the WPAF, the other under the AOG, were conducted by non-professionals, the activities' broad objectives being to enhance and promote the Military Academy, not to supplement or replace government funds for the accomplishment of the Academy's purpose or mission, a characteristic which was to remain a centerpiece of the later, reorganized, consolidated fund raising activity.

In retrospect there were two major problems with this fund raising arrangement which pointed toward a reorganization of the overall activity. Neither of these problems was attributable to either the Academy, the AOG or the WPAF. Rather, they resulted from the unstructured growth of a system which significantly affected all three. The first and perhaps most serious problem was the absence of a central, coordinated private fund raising policy for the Academy. Fund raising for the West Point Fund had grown during the 1960's, bringing with that growth a need for a common understanding concerning private fund raising between the Academy, the AOG and the WPAF. This need became apparent within the Academy staff with the announcement of the 1970 private fund raising initiative. A common understanding was absolutely essential because while the Academy was the ultimate beneficiary and user of the private funds, the WPAF was charged with the solicitation of the funds to be used and the AOG represented the graduates from whom most of the funds presumably were to be raised.

The second problem, again as seen in retrospect, was clearly related to the first; it was the absence in either the WPAF or the AOG of an assigned and functioning fund raising staff to execute a fund raising program and to support, advise and assist those volunteer graduates who were actively soliciting funds. This problem was manifest in the appearance that the Academy staff, acting to fill

this void, had become too closely associated with the fund solicitation activity.

It should be emphasized here that as Thompson evaluated the private fund raising situation at West Point in the spring and summer of 1970 his focus was on how best to organize for the kind of fund raising for which the future likely would call. He said later: "I don't think we ever proved, or attempted to prove, rigorously, that AOG could do the job better than WPAF. It was a judgement call, but one which I had no trouble making." Emphasizing the point, he added: "We were concerned only with fund raising in the future. Our whole case was simply that all alumni activities, one of which was fund raising, could, in future (and in view of AOG's newly acquired financial health) best be conducted by AOG."

As Thompson planned the reorganization of the Academy's alumni affairs, fund raising matters were at the core of the issues to be resolved. Another major issue, more for resolution by the AOG and the WPAF than the Academy, was the management of the alumni publications program - publishing and editing Assembly magazine and the Register of Graduates.

In 1946, with the creation of the WPAF, the overall publishing function was split between the WPAF and the AOG, primarily because of the active duty officer on the AOG staff. The WPAF, with its retired graduate executive who was not subject to government transfer, was responsible for overall publishing of Assembly and the Register of Graduates, including financial management and the solicitation of advertising. In addition, the WPAF executive was designated editor of the Register of Graduates. On the other hand, the AOG with its membership relationship with Academy graduates and its active Army executive was responsible for editing Assembly magazine, and thus also for editorial policy.

It should be noted here that the WPAF was created in 1946 by the AOG Board of Trustees with cross membership on the respective governing boards. With the passage of time and changing situation, composition of the boards changed, the AOG engaged a retired graduate as editor of Assembly, and the number of subscribers increased rapidly with the larger graduating classes of the 1960's. With responsibility for the publications program split between the WPAF and the AOG Boards and staffs, it appeared to Thompson that, like the fund raising program, the publications program would be more responsive to the needs of the Academy and more cost effective if the program were consolidated under one organization, and that the AOG. He

then began exploring how this could be accomplished in conjunction with new arrangements for the fund raising program.

The AOG which was the subject of Thompson's planning was an organization which had been shaped by its governing Board of Trustees and a succession of Superintendents over the years since its founding in 1869. With the graduation of the Class of 1970 there were 21,043 living graduates; in 1990 there were 35,262, an increase of 68%. In 1970 the Board of Trustees met twice a year, at Homecoming and during Graduation Week. Investment of the AOG Endowment Fund and selection of the annual Thayer Award recipient were the only major, continuing committee requirements. The AOG staff was small - 10 persons, including the active duty executive and a civil servant - compared with 35 in 1990. With an endowment of \$500,000 and an annual budget of less than \$300,000, there was relatively little activity. Sixty-nine West Point Societies (local alumni chapters) were on the books - many not very active - most, like the AOG, mainly social and fraternal in purpose. Celebration of Founders Day in March was the focal point of the annual calendar of activities. Some of the larger societies undertook special functions from time to time; however, these were the exception. The AOG provided the Academy with little support for either its admissions or public relations programs. Assembly was primarily for class news and obituaries; the Register of Graduates, then and now a useful directory of information about graduates, was undergoing computerization under the editorship of Krisman '39.

The lower floors of Cullum Hall, bulging with the AOG staff in 1990, were then primarily transient billets for returning graduates. One old grad who used the facility frequently was admonished by Academy officials for conducting a sales operation from his room. Another, who seemed to live there by the month, became an object of considerable interest to AOG employees as he frequently neglected to don his bathrobe over his underwear in moving from his room to the bathroom at the end of the hall. This same graduate, however, upon his death bequeathed to the AOG a sizeable amount of money.

The AOG had no computers; all of its mailings were made from Cullum Hall; the Academy Comptroller performed the annual audit of the AOG financial records. Relative to many major college alumni organizations, the AOG was small and "self-oriented," with its primary focus on accomplishing its historical purpose of promoting fraternal ties among graduates and disseminating information concerning the Academy and its graduates.

With the receipt of the funds of the Trott estate by the AOG, with the new leadership of the Academy and the AOG and with something of an aura of reform resulting from the failed cadet activities endowment initiative, the AOG was in a very strong position to change itself in ways to provide increased support to the Academy as it entered a new, post-Vietnam War period. What those changes were, why they were adopted, how they were made and what their effect was on AOG support of West Point are subjects of the next segment.

REORGANIZATION AND REDIRECTION OF ALUMNI AFFAIRS

As the newly elected President of the AOG in the spring of 1970, Paul Thompson had served for a number of years as an AOG Trustee and member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. He was aware of the important role the WPAF had played in the Academy's alumni affairs during the previous 25 years and of the service to the Academy and the nation of the individual members of the WPAF Board of Managers, perhaps the best known of whom was Maxwell D. Taylor '22. Also, from his experience as Vice Chairman of Readers Digest, where he had overseen on behalf of the owners, DeWitt and Lila Wallace, its post-World War II expansion, Thompson was especially well qualified to oversee the Academy's alumni publications activities, and he came to know the obligations and risks involved in managing a private fund raising operation for the benefit of a government institution.

Although Thompson had not been closely associated with the Army since World War II, he knew many senior Army officers and the major players of the AOG, the WPAF and the Superintendent's Fund Committee, which was charged with raising private funds through the West Point Fund for the Academy. Moreover, through visits to West Point and with the new Superintendent Thompson developed a direct working relationship with him and an understanding of the operations of the Academy staff. He knew that the resolution of the organizational issues as he saw them would require a combination of approvals and concurrences of not only the AOG Board of Trustees but also of the Superintendent, Knowlton, the Board of Managers of the WPAF, headed by Cortlandt Van R. Schuyler '22, and of the Chairman of the Superintendent's Fund Committee, Lucius D. Clay Nov '18.

In his approach to the reorganization of the Academy's alumni affairs Thompson has recalled that he worked primarily through the WPAF and AOG senior staff officers and depended upon the AOG staff officer, who was also the Alumni Secretary on the USMA staff, to coordinate the developing plans within the USMA staff and, as necessary, with the Superintendent. The USMA Comptroller, the Staff Judge Advocate and the Alumni Secretary were the senior USMA staff officers who participated in developing the plans for the Academy and it was primarily through them that Thompson's proposals were presented within the USMA staff and that the Superintendent was kept informed. In his meetings with Knowlton, Thompson reviewed the nature and progress of his

planning activities and has said that he knew the "Supe" would be the "final arbiter" of the reorganization plans.

Thompson also sensed that because of Knowlton's close professional relationship with the Army Chief of Staff, Westmoreland, who, while Superintendent in the early '60's, had, along with Clay, founded the West Point Fund, then called the "Superintendent's Fund," the Academy staff's continuing participation in the development of the reorganization plans would almost certainly signal Westmoreland's agreement with the end product. Through frequent discussions with the Executive Committee and senior Trustees of the AOG, Thompson was confident that, though there might be some opposition to the direction in which he proposed to lead the AOG, the Board of Trustees would ultimately approve the evolving reorganization plans.

Thompson had known General Clay during their Corps of Engineer service together and during the Berlin Blockade of 1948, when Clay commanded US forces in Germany and Thompson was initiating the publication of the European edition of Readers Digest. That summer of 1970 Thompson visited Clay in Boston with the intention of briefing him on the reorganization plans during a round of golf. At Thompson's invitation James M. Gavin, a classmate of Thompson's who would later be a major player in the fund raising program, joined them. However, as Thompson reported later: "The meeting on the golf course was pleasant; Clay thought highly of Gavin, but we never got around to discussion of details."

Thompson has recalled that he had a second meeting with Clay at his "plush office at Lehman Brothers, No. 1 Wall Street, I believe was the address. I was accompanied by Dead Eye Henry, (Leonard D. Henry Class of '31, who was then Chairman of the WPAF's Superintendent's Fund Committee), self-described as a good friend of Clay. The meeting must have taken place late in our planning process, because I had with me a loose-leaf folder containing finalized, or semi-finalized, charts and tabulations. My purpose was to get a strong endorsement from Clay for our proposals. I had high hopes and had looked forward to the meeting with enthusiasm.

"We were ushered into a conference room, small but elegant. Clay never liked to beat about the bush, so once seated I opened my folder and was in the process of spreading out my first (organization) chart. Lucius Clay interrupted, abruptly. I can quote him, almost verbatim: 'Thompson, it is pointless to go on with this. In suppressing the present fund-raising procedure (i.e., the