

Another new initiative that emerged during this time was the 50-Year Affiliation Program. In 1999, the Class of 1949 asked the Superintendent if it could present second lieutenant bars, inscribed with "49-99," to the graduates of the Class of 1999. The Superintendent agreed, and four members of the Class of 1949 greeted each cadet as he or she left the dais, diploma in hand, and presented the bars. Called a "friend raising" program by the Alumni Support team, the 50-year Affiliation Program later expanded to include a class flag presented to the yearling class as it completed summer training at Camp Buckner and a class coin presented to the cow class upon their taking the affirmation oath. Today, the 50-Year Affiliation Program features eight formal events and a handful of unofficial events at which cadets "Grip Hands" with those who preceded them a half-century earlier, including R-Day, A-Day, Plebe Class Crest Unveiling, Yearling CFT Class Flag Presentation, Cow Affirmation, Ring Weekend, Branch Night and Graduation.

Finally, in November 2000, AOG inaugurated the Class Ring Memorial Program. Proposed by Ron Turner '58 in the May/June 1999 edition of ASSEMBLY, the "Ring Melt," as it is more popularly known, has today become one of AOG's most revered traditions. As described by Turner, the program involves "graduates bequeathing (or graduates' descendants donating) West Point class rings for the specific purpose of incorporating the gold into the class rings of future graduates." Demonstrating that he had a long-term "tradition" in mind when he proposed his idea, Turner also recommended retaining some gold shavings after each melt so that these could be placed in the following year's melt, thus ensuring each year's "Memorial Gold ingot . . . would contain some of every ring donated." To date, a total of 575 rings have been donated, spanning the classes of 1896 to 1997. All graduates' rings from the classes of 2002-2020 contain this "legacy gold" from the Class Ring Memorial Program.

NEW GOVERNANCE, NEW OPERATIONS

With growth in the number of services it offered and the amount of money it was raising, AOG began considering changes to its organizational structure soon after the conclusion of the Bicentennial Campaign. At the same time, legislation proposed by New York's Attorney General requiring non-profit organizations in the state to follow practices similar to the Sarbanes-Oxley corporate reforms, which Congress enacted during this period, also prompted AOG to consider changes to its governance model. Thus, in 2003, AOG formed the 2020 Governance Committee, which presented the results of its yearlong study to the Board of Trustees in January 2005.

According to the Governance Committee's findings, the AOG board structure of the time was inefficient: "too many people for effective ideas, too infrequent for full consideration, too little time for all issues, too cumbersome to act as needs demand." Furthermore, in the opinion of AOG's legal counsel at the time, the early 2000s governance model left its 54 Trustees exposed to potential personal liability. The Governance Committee's solution was the creation of a smaller Board of Directors (12-16 members), plus Chairman and Vice-Chairman, who would be legally and fiduciarily responsible for the Association, supported by a larger 57-member (ultimately reduced to 54-member)

Advisory Council made up of a representative group of class, society, and at-large members. The Governance Committee believed that the Advisory Council would provide AOG with broad graduate representation and participation while also accessing a wide diversity of skills and experiences. They also felt that service on the Advisory Council would be excellent training for future Board of Directors members. An additional change to note, the Governance Committee concluded that role of Chief Executive Officer should not remain with the Chairman but transfer to the AOG President, the person on-site in Herbert Alumni Center, who would have authority over the day-to-day affairs of the Association and the management of its staff. After careful consideration and multiple compromises, the modernization and rewrite of AOG's Bylaws was completed and voted on in March 2005, elections were held in the fall of 2005, and, for the first time since the 1920s, a new model of AOG governance took effect on January 1, 2006 under the chairmanship of Ted Stroup '62.

A year after receiving its new streamlined model of governance, AOG received a new name: the "West Point Association of Graduates" (WPAOG). Board of Trustee minutes show that AOG's Strategic Planning Committee had been considering the name change since 1998, as part of a larger effort to change the fundraising, marketing, and business organization efforts of the Association, but it wasn't implemented until WPAOG launched its redesigned website in September 2007. The timing of this coincided with "AOG Strategic Plan 2010," which the Board considered in May 2007. One of the considerations under discussion during this meeting was branding, and the Association's new name now incorporated what many consider to be one of the world's premiere brands—West Point.

The new website was the product of WPAOG's Information Systems Department (ISD), which had been established in 1996 to build and maintain AOG's hardware and software infrastructures. ISD also developed and executed the AOG Information Strategic Plan, which leveraged existing technology to enhance the ability to communicate information quickly via electronic means. In 1997, this plan led to a test program that provided classes with a notification of the death of one its members within 24 hours after confirmation by AOG. That same year, AOG purchased software that enabled it to create real-time distribution of news items and articles. This was the beginning of today's Death Notification System (DNS), which each day receives and verifies death notifications and then sends out daily updates to Class and Society leaders (on average 400 per year).

Given the emphasis on improving communication with graduate members and on increasing awareness of the new WPAOG name change, it wasn't long before the Association created a specific department to address both needs. Effective communication had been a decade-long goal of AOG by 2009, and in August of that year, the Association began to seriously consider establishing an integrated communications team. One of the questions facing WPAOG at the time was what to do with ASSEMBLY magazine. Although beloved by many graduates, by 2009, less than 20 percent were subscribing to the magazine, which meant that the majority of graduates were not receiving news from their

alma mater. After much discussion and deliberation, WPAOG elected to follow the model of several peer alumni associations and produce a new quarterly magazine that would be mailed out free of charge to all graduates. West Point magazine debuted in January 2011, and in February WPAOG's Publications Directorate became part of the new Department of Communications and Marketing, which was charged with mastering new communications technologies in the internet era, becoming an ongoing source of information for graduates and promoting participation in WPAOG services.

At the same time, WPAOG's Finance Department continued its management of gift funds and endowments for West Point and the Long Gray Line, aided by expert advice from the Investment Committee. Today, WPAOG manages more than \$380 million in endowment funds, and the Association has received the highest rankings for transparency and efficient funds management from non-profit watchdogs Guidestar (Platinum) and Charity Navigator (4 stars).

In the early 2000s, AOG tried an innovative approach to building gift funded brick and mortar projects, which now encompass both new construction and renovation. WPAOG successfully managed the planning, design and construction of the Hoffman Press Box in 2002-03 and proffered the completed project as a gift to the government. The success of this approach led to it becoming the new model for gift-funded construction at West Point, and by 2019 WPAOG had completed over 170 projects, representing more than \$250 million donated by members of the Long Gray Line".

RECOGNIZING WILLIAM WHITE FOR THE 2019 MONTANA CON- GRESSIONAL VETERAN COM- MENDATION

HON. GREG GIANFORTE

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Mr. GIANFORTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize William White of Helena for the Montana Congressional Veteran Commendation for his service to his country and community.

Mr. White served in the U.S. Army for over 25 years, spanning from Vietnam to the Gulf Wars. He received multiple commendations during his time in the Army, including the Legion of Merit.

Mr. White has continued to serve his community. Volunteering at Fort Harrison Veterans Hospital, Mr. White has accumulated over 9500 hours serving in the office and as a driver. For his efforts, he earned a Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award. Additionally, he is an active member of the American Legion, serving as Post Commander for Post No. 2 in Helena, as the VA Volunteer Services Coordinator for the American Legion of Montana, and serves on the National Veterans Affairs Rehabilitation Commission.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in commending William White for his service to his country and community.