



The Friends of the Air Force Academy Library — NEWSLETTER —

P.O. Box 188 | U.S. Air Force Academy, CO 80840-0188
friends@usafalibrary.com | <https://friends.usafalibrary.com>

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President's Message

The Friends of the Air Force Academy Library has completed another great year. Our Business Manager, Amanda Hess, continued her efforts to reduce our costs by completing tasks we had previously contracted out at significantly higher rates. The McDermott Library Special Collections Branch received another year of excellent support from our certified archivist, Aaron Wilson. Guided by Dr. Hebert's priorities to enhance Special Collections, Aaron continued processing the backlog of donated manuscript and audiovisual collections. Since January 2020, The Friends' contractors have inventoried and evaluated 2,227 collections and 496 new accessions as well as completely processed 372 collections and over 8,502 AV items. An over seven-year backlog of unprocessed items remains.

There will be changes in The Friends' leadership when the Board votes in May to replace three members. Steve Simon and Jim Head, members of our Executive Committee, have resigned because they have moved far from Colorado. Steve will continue to serve remotely as our liaison with the Air Force Academy Foundation. In his many years on the committee, Jim served as Vice President and as Secretary. We will miss the experience and wise counsel of these two gentlemen.

Please enjoy the rest of this newsletter that includes some "gems" of the library's collections. We helped the

Academy celebrate 50 years with women cadets by emphasizing the Oral History Collections' interviews with some of the "80s Ladies" and the staff that supported them during their first year at the Academy. The entire collection contains more than 2,000 items that need to be re-recorded from reel-to-reel tape for preservation. You will also find an excellent article by one of the first six women admitted to the Academy, describing that first year and the contributions our women graduates have made to the USAF and our nation.

The Friends' only fundraising activities are via the form accompanying this newsletter and our annual holiday letter in November. We are encouraged by the increased level of donations driven largely by patrons using qualified charitable donations from retirement and donor advised funds. These activities raise about 10 percent of our annual budget. The rest of our annual support is funded by investment income from a major bequest made several years ago. To include The Friends in your will or estate plan, please use the contact details on the enclosed form.

If you are interested in becoming involved in our efforts at any level, or if you have items to donate, please contact us at <https://friends.usafalibrary.com>

**The Friends Annual Luncheon will
be held on 21 May
Please see Page 5 for details**

Gems of Special Collections

Aaron Wilson

CLASS OF 1980 ORAL HISTORIES

Clark Special Collections holds 1,500 oral histories, many conducted by The Friends. Since 2026 marks the fiftieth anniversary of women entering the service academies, we highlight the 18 oral histories from members of the Class of 1980, an interview with former Commandant of Cadets Brigadier General Stanley C. Beck (1975-1978), and an interview with two Women Air Training Officers. These oral histories detail the triumphs and challenges

faced by members of the Class of 1980, their surrogate upper-class trainers, and commanding officers during this significant cultural shift. All 20 interviews have printed transcriptions available, and 12 also have digitized audio versions. Digitizing the remaining eight and re-recording three to preserve them is part of the multi-year backlog that The Friends are processing with your support.

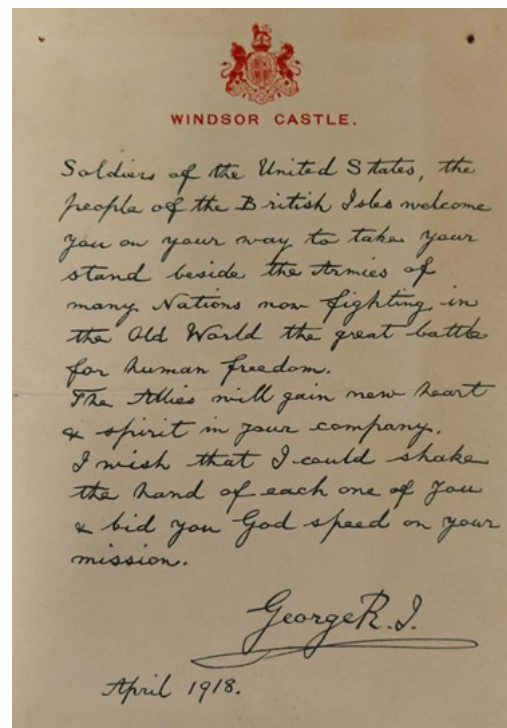
THE FRANK M. GURRIER COLLECTION

In late Spring 2025, The Friends processed Frank Gurrier's scrapbook, which was donated to the Academy in 1957. The scrapbook documents early aviation from 1903 to 1937, with a significant focus on Gurrier's service in World War I with the 349th Aero Squadron. One section of the scrapbook showcases Gurrier's artistic talent, featuring color drawings of crashed planes, a drawing of German POWs sabotaging his aircraft, and sketches of British and American planes in flight.

A handwritten thank-you letter from King George V adds value to this collection. Of particular significance, Gurrier included a letter addressed to "My fellow Airmen." This letter presents the scrapbook as a gift for all cadets, future and present. This collection provides cadets and other researchers with a valuable opportunity to study early flight from both military and civilian perspectives.



Watercolor drawing by Frank Gurrier depicting sabotage to his plane's right engine by German POWs.



Letter from King George V thanking American Service members for their role in World War I.

50th Anniversary of Women at USAFA

Marianne LaRivee

Fifty years ago this spring, 157 young women were preparing to join their male classmates as the incoming USAFA Class of 1980. I was one of them, and I was anticipating a challenging environment, a fine education, and a clear path to pilot training.



Photograph by Tsgt Herman J. Kokojan, won the Military Picture of the Year Competition in 1976.

It was an exciting, intimidating, heady moment, both for us and for the nation. The idea of females joining the ranks of military academy cadets was controversial, but in October

1975 President Ford signed legislation directing the academies to admit women. The services complied—with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

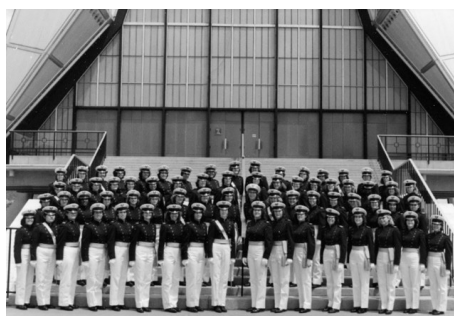
USAFA was the most proactive, sending letters to every high school in the nation, admitting women to the Prep School in January 1976, and running 15 young female officers through an abbreviated training course to act as surrogate upperclassmen. Staff members modified some physical programs to reflect the relative difference in upper-body strength. Restrooms and locker rooms were converted and allocated for women. Appropriately, academic programs and military training remained as rigorous as ever.

The greatest obstacle the academies encountered in integrating women was the attitudes of men—staff and faculty members, as well as cadets. During an orientation meeting for cadet candidates at Andrews AFB, USAFA upperclassmen told me that women would face strong opposition upon arrival and would likely quit after realizing that they were neither welcome nor suited for the rigors of the Academy.

That attitude was not helped by the constant *unwelcome* media attention we received upon our arrival at USAFA, which angered the upperclassmen and alienated our male classmates. But these were just some of the growing pains inherent in such a change. We knew we were part of a larger goal, and in many ways our experience was representative of women breaking into other traditionally male-dominated spheres: business, politics, and academia.

From our perspective, we had an opportunity previously reserved for men, and we couldn't squander it. We wanted to survive the rigors of Academy life on the same terms as our male classmates. The stakes were high: we were proving to Congress and the nation that women belonged at the Academy, that we could not only survive, but excel.

Since the spring of 1976, five decades of women graduates have accepted the challenge, grown from the Academy experience, strengthened USAFA as an institution, and gone as far as their talents and hard work could take them. They have become pilots, astronauts, general officers, doctors, lawyers, members of Congress, CEOs, and college presidents—forever positively shaping the Air Force and the nation. Today, the controversy has faded, and the men and women of the Academy—faculty, staff, and cadets—work together to educate and train leaders for the future. I'm honored to be counted as one of them.



Class of 1980 Women on the steps of the Academy Chapel.

Gems of Special Collections

Aaron Wilson

THE JEWISH AMERICAN VIETNAM WAR COLLECTION

Over the Summer of 2025, Bob Jacobs donated the Jewish Americans Vietnam War collection. This collection presents short personal narratives of 90 Jewish American veterans of the Vietnam War. Many highlight how the service members earned the Medal of Honor and/or other highly distinguished military awards.

Researchers seeking a deeper understanding of the intersection of faith and wartime service will find great value in this collection. Americans of many faiths fought and died in the Vietnam War, as they did in all United States armed conflicts. These Jewish veterans' narratives exemplify the role of faith while enduring combat.



Cover artwork for the 90 Vietnam War Veterans' Narratives book.

The Friends Honor Book Commemorative Program Certificate Index- A Potential Research Tool

Paul Pirog

Since the early 1990's, The Friends has offered donors who wish to honor individuals or organizations the opportunity to create a certificate placed in The Friends' Honor Book. The Honor Book is currently displayed in the Clark Special Collections of the McDermott Library where it is readily accessible to cadets/faculty/staff, and to visitors by special arrangement.

I recently had occasion to draft a certificate for a donor who was unable to provide much background information on their WWII honoree. As I began to investigate the honoree's war experiences, I came across his flying unit, his aircraft's nickname, fellow crew member names, and a trove of other interesting information, including photographs. I discovered that one of the keys to obtaining this information was identifying the military unit of the honoree -- which then led to online archives from the military unit's historical association and the foreign air museum where the honoree was stationed. Although this helped immensely in producing the requested honor certificate, we saw that the data contained in the certificate itself was worthy of indexing for researchers.

Within the last year, The Friends has worked to produce a basic index for the Honor Certificates, in a spreadsheet format, that depicts the honoree's

name, unit, fellow crew member names, military academy graduating year (if applicable), aircraft nickname, and more – all gleaned from the original Honor Certificate. This downloadable database is searchable, allowing a researcher to identify and cross-reference specific information that might not be available in other databases. The index is still a work in progress, as more information continues to be indexed from the certificates. For those interested, the database of current honorees is located on The Friends' website at: <https://tinyurl.com/ytpn3anz>.

Over the past 12 years, more than 1,200 individuals, units, and organizations have been commemorated with an Honor Book Certificate. The honoree(s) need not be military or deceased to be commemorated. The Friends encourages you to consider recognizing these honorees by donating a minimum of \$50 and completing and submitting the Honor Book Commemoration Application Form, also located on The Friends' website at: <https://tinyurl.com/44uc3wx4>.

Thank you for honoring those who are special to you and for your generosity.

McDermott Library Update

Joel Hebert

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The McDermott Library spent the past year under the leadership of Associate Dean and Director Col Ted Kim. Col Kim has guided the library through many challenges, including federal hiring freezes, staff reductions, and budgetary pressures. Dedicated McDermott Library teammates provided uninterrupted services to cadets and faculty throughout the shutdown. We are looking forward to renewed efforts to hire a permanent civilian director and recruit new colleagues. We are also eager to continue delivering key services to cadets and faculty while supporting the vision of our new Dean of the Faculty, Brigadier General James Valpiani.

Over the past year, library staff have made many significant achievements in our mission to support cadets and faculty. Technical Services adapted to an evolving acquisition environment and delivered electronic resources to nearly 500,000 annual users. Our systems librarians orchestrated the careful and deliberate stewardship of library systems and electronic resources through fast-

paced AI-driven technological shifts. Our circulation technicians celebrated the ribbon-cutting of our new “Best Seller” collection to target avid consumers of fiction. And our research librarians rolled out USAFA’s institutional repository *Scholars Hangar* to feature and preserve faculty and cadet research output at USAFA.

In Clark Special Collections, we were excited to stand up USAFA’s first ever digital archives. After acquiring ArchivesSpace and Preservica database software, Special Collections finally achieved parity with peer institutions across Colorado in our ability to make strategic archival materials more accessible to users and to properly preserve digital assets. Our enhanced presence in this digital space has also increased our ability to engage in outreach with cadets and faculty. We continue to pursue strong relationships with DF academic departments across disciplines. All told, Special Collections has experienced a marked uptick in cadet visits over the past year. As ever, I am grateful to The Friends for their continuing support of these operations.

Visit our website at:
<https://friends.usafalibrary.com>

or scan the QR code below



**The Friends Annual Luncheon will be held on 21 May.
Use the enclosed RSVP form or register online at:
https://2026_FOTL_Luncheon.eventbrite.com**