

MEMORANDUM TO THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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On May 5, 2003, as a 1955 West Point graduate, former commander of Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, 1976-78, and a retired US Air Force colonel, I became involved in an intense controversy which had been under way at the Academy since March of that year.

At the time the Superintendent of the Academy was Lieutenant General William J. Lennox, Jr., '71, and the Chairman of the West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG) was Mr. Thomas B. Dyer III, '67. General Lennox's immediate predecessor was then-retired Lieutenant General Daniel P. Christman, '63. Mr. Dyer's immediate predecessor was Mr. John A. Hammack, '49.

In early 2003 the West Point class of 1953 was approaching its 50th reunion at the Academy. But the controversy that began in March was spreading among members of numerous graduated classes over potentially explosive revelations if publically disclosed. The matter's proximate cause was the 1953 class's discovery of the placement at West Point of a statue of Army's legendary head football coach, Earl Henry "Red" Blaik, '20 who had returned to the Academy as head football coach for the 1941 season. Coach Blaik died in 1989 and is interred in the Academy cemetery. As a tribute to his 18 years of service at West Point the donors of the statue planned to wrap around its circular base a bronze plaque containing the names of all of Coach Blaik's football lettermen throughout his tenure, and would include the names of 23 lettermen who had received general [administrative] discharges from the Academy in 1951 for cheating in academics, and in some cases, other serious offenses which were all violations of the cadet honor code.

The underlying cause of the 2003 problem was rooted in the football-centered, 1951 cheating scandal at West Point, labeled at the time a "cheating incident" by the Army and the Academy. which literally became an unprecedented national firestorm. Ultimately, the investigating board of three officers, all Academy graduates and World War II veterans, recommended the discharge of 94 cadets who were found guilty of cheating in three undergraduate classes, with 22 of the 94 also found guilty of false swearing, and 11 others among the 94 found to have guilty knowledge of cheating.

In 1951, the Army was undergoing a transition from the Articles of War to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and there existed the distinct possibility the cadets found guilty in the investigation would face courts-martial. The board concluded that had the spread of cheating not been stopped, the Academy's honor code and system would have been destroyed.

After a review of all cases by a second board of officers and the Army's Judge Advocate General, 83 cadets were discharged from the classes of 1952 and 1953, including 37 then-still-active or former Army football players. The 11 cadets found to have guilty knowledge of cheating, but with corroborating evidence proved to have not engaged in it themselves, were reinstated in the Corps of Cadets.

Nevertheless, the incident had devastating and demoralizing effects on the Academy and its cadets, and Army football, when all but two returning lettermen were discharged from a previously highly respected team, considered by many sports writers to be in contention for another mythical national championship for the 1951 season.

On May 5, vice president of the class of 1953 Edward P. Andrews, who had served on the WPAOG Board of Trustees from 1991 to 1997, sent me an e-mail that included a quotation from my book, *A Return to Glory*, about the events of 1951 and its aftermath. In our correspondence he indicated about 80 men from several classes were circulating an e-mail to be sent to General Lennox asking that the Blaik statue project be stopped. Mr. Andrews explained they were unsure of the quotation's accuracy, asked if I would check it and, also, could they obtain my permission to use it in their letter? Their version of the quotation did need a slight correction, which I made and returned it to him, granting permission to use it. He then asked me to join in signing the letter, and I did. From that time forward I became ever more deeply involved in the ongoing controversy.

In August 2000, after 7 years of research and writing, my first book had been published. *A Return to Glory: The Untold Story of Honor, Dishonor and Triumph at the United States Military Academy, 1950-1953*, was a Korean War era history that included the extensively researched, comprehensive, inside story of the 1951 cheating incident and the subsequent rebuilding of the Army football team that had been decimated by its consequences.

In 2001, as a result of an invitation shortly after 9/11 by the Chairman of the Cadet Honor Committee, I was placed on temporary active duty to visit West Point in the first week of December and speak to the entire Honor Committee, composed of all cadet company representatives, each member elected within the upper three classes in each cadet company in the Corps of Cadets. A similar invitation was extended in the fall of 2003, after the controversy had completely subsided, and I again traveled to West Point and addressed the Honor Committee during the second week in January 2004.

Following the e-mail exchange with Mr. Andrews, I began to track, as best I could, what was in progress at West Point. The e-mails, letters and phone calls of protest didn't stop General Lennox. I later learned he was, in effect, obligated to continue the project because his predecessor, General Christman, consistent with Army and Academy policy, apparently had sought and obtained approval in principle from the Secretary of the Army, through the Army Chief of Staff, to accept a \$300,000 gift to create and place the statue at the Academy.

Also, presumably consistent with an Academy policy not publically known, about which I only learned after the controversy subsided, Mr. Jack Hammack, the then-recently retired WPAOG CEO, and some number of his AOG staff officers, had contracted with a representative group of fund raisers for the statue. That group included Bob Blaik, the coach's son, who had been one of those discharged in 1951. Mr. Hammack had previously been announced as a 2003 Distinguished Graduate Award recipient, and the last week in May, with other graduates receiving the same award, was honored in a formal ceremony that included a full dress Corps of Cadets review on the Academy's Plain.

I didn't realize it at the time, but General Lennox, who knew of the Hammack contract, faced some potentially serious problems. If he halted the statue's completion because of the plaque, a breach of contract was in the offing. What's more he would have to go up the Army chain

of command and explain why the decision to place the statue at West Point had to be reversed, since it had already been approved in concept by the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army.

Facts I was able to uncover suggested that General Lennox had probably gone forward for final approval, if it was required, even overriding the faculty's Museum, Historical and Memorialization Committee's recommendation against approval. The chairman of the Committee at that time was Professor and Head of the History Department, Colonel Lance Betros, '77. I also learned that the fund raisers were apparently falling short of the \$300,000 needed and, in the period May 5-20, a 1951 graduate and retired former attorney, Seldon P. Graham, Jr., informed me in a series of e-mails that someone, whose name he couldn't reveal, had transferred \$150,000 from a deceased classmate's estate to help fund the statue. Further investigation would later reveal that amount was in error, overstated by \$50,000. I also learned that one of the other fund raising techniques used was the promise of a miniature Blaik statuette given to each contributor of \$7,500 or more, a ploy that proved ineffective in closing the funding gap.

The deceased graduate from Mr. Graham's class had bequeathed his estate's funds to the Academy's benefit. Mr. Graham, had personal and professional knowledge of the estate, but was not an estate executor. Rather, he was an active WPAOG member and pro-bono legal advisor for the organization; he further explained he believed the deceased graduate, if he were still living, would not have approved of the withdrawal to help pay for the statue.

The increasing resistance to the Blaik statue at that time was directly attributable to Mr. Andrews' and his 1953 classmates' intense efforts to cause the reversal of General Lennox's decision. As examples, Bert E. Tucker, '56, volunteered on May 8 that he would personally publicize the names of the men discharged in 1951 if the decision were not reversed. Peter Joel Vann, also '56, one of Army's great quarterbacks, a 1954 second team All-American and, at that time, a candidate for West Point's Athletic Hall of Fame, e-mailed General Lennox, stating he wanted his name removed from the lettermen's plaque if the present decision stood. A growing chorus of important voices, including retired senior Army and Air Force officers who were Academy graduates were stating their opposition to the decision.

From May 5 forward, after signing Mr. Andrews' letter to General Lennox, I began to follow the unfolding events with increasing interest and deepening concern. As a graduate I had a discomfiting feeling that well-known principles involving fiduciary responsibilities had been seriously compromised. As a former base commander and tactical fighter wing and Tactical Air Warfare Center vice commander in the Air Force, with additional duties of inspector general at base level on two major air force installations, I was familiar with Department of Defense policies on gifts to military organizations and installations from private individuals and corporations. I had also carefully reviewed copies of relevant Academy regulations and procedures pertaining to gifts to the Academy, fully recognizing the Academy is a national institution of higher learning for which there are differing governing regulations and laws in matters of fund raising.

I also became aware that the controversy spawned by the proposed lettermen's plaque had inspired at least one other senior general officer, an Academy graduate and WPAOG Trustee from the class of 1944, to express his intent to let his son take the issue to his employer, the *New York Times*, if General Lennox didn't reverse his decision. As events continued to unfold it became clear that General Lennox had decided to press ahead in spite of the fact that public

exposure of what was planned could well ignite another Academy PR disaster.

An alternative proposal was circulating among certain graduates suggesting there be no names on the bronze plaque, that in their place, some other approved information should be placed on it describing Coach Blaik's numerous contributions to Army athletics, Academy football, the Academy, the Army and the nation, and that other graduates would volunteer to pay the cost to make the changes. It was a concept I personally supported and advocated, as well. There were many who admired Coach Blaik and wanted him honored, but were strongly or unalterably opposed to letting the discharged cadets also be honored with their names anywhere on the Blaik statue..

In hindsight, it was obvious that such a proposal would not have been accepted by the Academy, the WPAOG, and especially the gift donors because of the contract signed with the group offering the gift.

On or about May 10, 2003, I began drafting what became a 12-page letter to General Lennox, intending to copy Mr. Dyer, the WPAOG CEO, and mail it, if events convinced me it had to be mailed, and they did. Later facts in this case suggested that in June 2003 Mr. Dyer had to have circulated the letter among one or more other AOG officers.

By May 20, the letter's date, I knew General Lennox had already briefed the WPAOG Board of Trustees telling them he was going ahead with the statue, and he had done the same at the annual WPAOG leadership conference on or about May 17, a conference attended by West Point Society representatives from throughout the United States and overseas, who traveled at their own expense. When I learned of General Lennox's briefing to the leadership conference I stepped up my pace on the letter and mailed it on May 27. During the time the letter was being drafted I decided to use it to approach General Lennox directly, as would a staff officer on active duty, asking for a one-on-one hearing, trying to warn him of serious trouble ahead if he didn't reverse course. When I learned he had briefed the leadership conference intending to press ahead, I decided I had to mail the letter to his quarters, not wanting his staff to have first access to it for fear they wouldn't let him see it until they "staffed it" to recommend to him how to respond, or simply drafted a response for him.

On reflection, I decided the letter wasn't good enough on its own merits because it was too easy to bury along with all the rest of the letters, e-mails and phone calls which had not been persuasive. It had to be made public, at least among Academy graduates, almost simultaneously with its posting to General Lennox. I would send it to West Point graduates online, to as many class nets and individuals as I could reach. On May 30, I so informed retired Army Col. John Calabro, '68, Vice President for Alumni Support in the WPAOG, who called and attempted to talk me out of releasing the letter on the internet. After thinking over his request for a few minutes, I called him back and said I was sending it out in three parts to as many graduates as I could.

The First and Second Felonies: The Inadvertent Confession of An Unauthorized Taking of \$100,000 from a private estate willed to the benefit of the Academy to instead use it to help defray the balance of the statue's \$300,000 cost, followed by an attempt to suppress evidence by intimidation.

On May 30th, I was surprised to be called at home by John Hammack, the former WPAOG CEO. His opening words were, "You know, you told an untruth about me." When I asked

what he meant, he said, "You know, in the last few paragraphs of your letter to General Lennox."

Then I realized he was referring to the money taken from the estate. My reply was straightforward. "Mr. Hammack, that's not true, because when I wrote that letter, I didn't know who pulled the money from the estate. So thank you very much, you've just solved the mystery for me. Re-read the letter and you will see it clearly". A brief silence ensued. He had obviously not intended to disclose who had taken the \$100,000 from the estate and immediately recognized he had blundered.

The rest of the conversation did not go well, At one point we got into a shouting match about some supposed factual information the Academy believed to be true about the cheating incident in 1951, and I angrily told him, "West Point doesn't know what the f--- they're talking about." His reply was a seeming laugh, then, after a pause he asked, "Will you withdraw your letter?" My answer was a fast and firm "No!" that quickly ended the call on a stunning note. The gall and arrogance exhibited by the question, following his opening accusatory remarks and the realization he had given himself away with his inadvertent admission left me with questions I never asked him.

Emerging Evidence of a Third Felony: Known and Unknown Numbers of AOG Officers' Involved in a Conspiracy to Suppress Evidence.

Was the request to withdraw the letter simply for Mr. Hammack's sake? Or did he talk with one or more WPAOG officers, or maybe even General Lennox? I will never know for certain. My suspicion is it was for him only, or maybe for him and the WPAOG officers who perhaps misread the letter also and believed they could intimidate me into withdrawing it because I'd "told an untruth" about Mr. Hammack and the \$150,000 (actually \$100,000) he misappropriated from the estate, an act to which the WPAOG officers apparently acquiesced.

Following Mr. Hammack's phone call I was totally immersed in transmitting the letter, in three parts, via e-mails, and replying to incoming e-mails, some asking permission to forward copies to specific individuals, including many retired senior officers and graduates. I responded affirmatively to all such requests.

By June 2, the volume of responses increased, some by senior officers who appreciated the letter and others who angrily opposed it. At some point during this period, I was contacted by the wife of a 1950 graduate, Mrs. Anne Brinkerhoff, who told me that a WPAOG staff member with impressive credentials, Morris J. Herbert, said in an e-mail that WPAOG officers had been aware [or words to that effect] of Mr. Hammack's May 30 call to me. Mr. Herbert's email to Mrs. Brinkerhoff confirms that the letter copy I had addressed solely to Mr. Dyer had been seen by other WPAOG staff members the day it arrived, and they were probably aware of Mr. Hammack's intentions when he made his call to me.

On June 10, I learned from a retired senior general officer via e-mail that the WPAOG had withdrawn their proffer to the group offering the gift and that the lettermen's names would not be on the plaque. As the retired officer put it, "We've won round one." But it was also a revelation that General Lennox had reversed his decision regarding placement of the statue at West Point with the lettermen's names on the plaque. The flow of e-mails, calls and letters didn't slow in the next seven days. Then, on June 19, I received a query from Mr. Wayne Hall, a reporter for the *Newburgh Times Herald-Record* newspaper. He had acquired a copy

of the letter to General Lennox and he wanted to know if I had any comments about it. I said, "The letter speaks for itself." Within thirty minutes I forwarded a summary of Mr. Hall's query, and my reply to him, to the Academy's Public Affairs Officer and the WPOAG's Col. (Ret) John Calabro.

On June 23, Mr. Hall's story broke in the Newburgh paper, but the matter didn't end there. Someone sent me a copy of the article and I learned Mr. Hall had literally "put words in my mouth" in his story, clearly in contradiction to what I had said to him. One or two days later, in a phone call Mr. Hall wanted to know who had taken the money from the deceased graduate's estate. I reminded him angrily he had written words I never said in his first piece and that under no circumstances would I reply to any questions from him or anyone else from the press, that he was not to be trusted. He apologized, in effect blaming his editor because the editor "...needed some words from you for the piece." Thus the work associated with the letter to General Lennox came slowly to a close.

I was to learn later that as a result of General Lennox's reversal of his decision, the fundraisers threatened to sue the WPAOG for breach of contract, but eventually backed away. The statue, presumably with the lettermen's plaque, was eventually removed from the Kimsey Center at West Point in 2003, and sent to the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana, where Coach Blaik had already been enshrined years earlier.

In the fall of 2003 reforms were undertaken in the WPAOG to put its governance on a corporate footing, complete with an elected Board of Directors and officers, as well as advisors, doing away with the old, appointed Trustee arrangement, which was based fundamentally on who gave substantial sums of money to the Academy, with WPAOG officers nominated by and voted in as Trustees by the already-appointed Trustees. It was the system that eventually spawned the corrupt practices this incident so vividly illustrates. The woman who led that reform effort is the present Vice Chairman of the WPAOG, Ellen W. Houlihan, '82.

Eventually I learned that my letter to General Lennox played a large part in finally stopping the placement of, the statue and the lettermen's plaque at the Academy, but it would be pure supposition for me to claim that it also caused the reforms in the graduate organization. Perhaps it did, but I concluded there is no way either General Lennox or the WPAOG Chairman was going to even narrowly disclose the contents of the letter to anyone working on governance and reform issues. General Lennox did call me one day during his deliberations after the letter arrived at the end of May to ask how many names on the statue's proposed lettermen's plaque would be men discharged for honor violations in 1951. The answer was 23. Ironically, those 23 names had been mounted in bronze on the walls of the old gymnasium at West Point for years, and when the old gym was completely remodeled and became the new Arvin Gym, it's my understanding the names remained in place.

In 2015 the controversy over the Blaik statue re-erupted. First, some people are proposing that since the statue has been returned from the College Football Hall of Fame because of its 2014 move to Atlanta from South Bend, it's display at West Point should now be approved, supposedly without the lettermen's plaque. Central to my involvement in this most recent upheaval were e-mail exchanges I had with the Rev. David R. Graham, who urged me write and post a background paper on the 2003 controversy. He first became aware of that incident in 2014 by reading online my 2003 letter to General Lennox. Though deeply involved in advocating for the Academy for decades, he had been unaware of the 2003 controversy.

Additionally, it was through conversations with Rev. Graham that I recognized no one but me had ever learned of the alleged felonies this Memorandum reveals. No one had ever exposed the corruption involved in the taking of the money or the attempts to suppress evidence of its taking. I simply never woke up to the fact that crimes might have been committed. Unwittingly, by focusing on trying to protect the Academy from public humiliation, I was unintentionally covering for men who, apparently, with little or no consideration of the officers' or cadets' codes of honor, to which they were all pledged, or even common ethical behavior, were casually dismissive of the grave offenses they were committing. At the same time, they were undermining the Academy's very foundations: the West Point Honor Code and Honor System.

The complete sources for this document are readily available upon request. The May 20, 2003 letter and the background paper can both be accessed at our personal website:

<http://www.west-point.org/class/usma1955//D/M/BlaikLtr.htm>

Both documents also reside in my official, permanent record at West Point, under Cullum No. 20315, and my name, William D. McWilliams III, class of 1955, in an electronic file maintained by the WPAOG.

Rev. Graham, along with my literary agent, Mr. Stuart Miller, have become staunch, devoted advocates for the Academy's honor code and system, which is, as Mr. Miller, a former active duty Marine, emphatically reminded me, literally, the foundation underlying all of our Armed Forces' officers' codes of honor. Both gentlemen are now actively and aggressively supporting Academy graduates' efforts to stop the renewed effort to display the Blaik statue at West Point, and my efforts to launch a formal investigation into the felonies I've alleged in this document, beginning with this Memorandum.

William D. McWilliams III
April 22, 2016