



May 20, 2003

**Lieutenant General William J. Lennox, Jr.
Superintendent, United States Military Academy
Qtrs 100
West Point, New York 10996**

Dear General Lennox:

The Blaik lettermen's plaque, if mounted on Coach Blaik's statue as now planned, will be the catalyst for a major, public explosion by angry Academy graduates. Literally thousands of graduates are now unifying, focusing their attention on the plaque and the well-intentioned but misguided reasons and means for memorializing Coach Earl Red Blaik '20 for his more than twenty-six years of service to the Academy, the Army, Army football, and the nation.

The Blaik plaque, though the obvious trigger for this controversy, is also symptomatic of deeper problems and a harbinger of things to come if institutional reforms are not undertaken in the near term. Contributing to the issue roiling the graduate community are three, major, underlying factors: 1. Fund raising, commemoration and memorialization policies and practices imported to the

United States Military Academy during General Graves' administration, and accelerated sharply during General Christman's administration and the Bicentennial Fund Raising Drive. Those policies and practices constituted the path through which the Blaik plaque became an inadequately-considered, behind-the-scenes, and then divisive reality. 2. The failure to do "lessons learned" studies of past mass outbreaks of cheating, beginning with the unprecedented honor incident of 1951. 3. The absence of full disclosure and "lessons learned," in turn led to voids and lapses in institutional memory; the growth of myths, half-truths, and some outright fabrications about those events and the men involved, numerous errors of fact, distortion and rewriting of history, and deliberate suppression of attempted studies because of feuding between factions of graduates coalesced around unfounded and ill-informed beliefs about those events.

If the public exposure comes to pass - and at this point there is every indication it will - there will be no way to avoid devastating effects on the Academy, the Department of the Army, and I might add - once more Army football will be unjustly dragged through the mud. The Academy will have no possible way of publicly explaining why it permitted large donors, with powerful influences, to establish terms and conditions of a gift ostensibly intended to honor Coach Earl "Red" Blaik, then included on his statue, the names of twenty-three men who didn't graduate because they were found guilty of honor violations, in some instances additionally found guilty of false swearing, resigned, and were discharged under less than honorable conditions.

Equally, there will be no way to avoid the spotlight which will be turned on the conflict of interest inherent in General Christman's position working for the Kimsey Foundation, the major contributor to the building named for Mr. Kimsey, and in which the Blaik statue stands. Mr. Hammack's involvement as the AOG chairman will be equally devastating for the AOG, however well meaning their fund raising activities were believed to be at the time the commitment was made to the Blaik family. And perhaps

the greatest irony of all is Earl "Red" Blaik, the man whom the statue is intended to honor, will once again be hammered, not just by the presence of the 23 lettermen's names, but by his own well-meaning son. The plaque will present only a tiny fraction of the good Earl Blaik accomplished for the Academy and Army football in twenty-six years at West Point, while rekindling the bitterness and controversy the anti-Blaik faction of graduates will feast on.

Secondly, it's important for you to know that AOG promises to take action to ensure this kind of thing (letterman's plaque) will never happen again, are not comforting. Trust and confidence has been breached by General Christman's and Mr. Hammack's actions and the perceived "behind-the-scenes" agreements with the Blaik family and donors to the project. What's more, this is a second, albeit far more serious error resulting from fund raising, commemoration and memorialization policies and practices during General Christman's superintendency. The first one occurred beginning in 1997 or earlier, but remained essentially hidden within the class of 1955, and never was exposed to the graduate community or the public.

The purpose of this letter is present you with history and facts clearly material to the issues at hand, and anchor them unmistakably to the future - not the past. The following paragraphs will also conclusively demonstrate the Academy and its superintendents could not possibly have learned the lessons of 1951, and the resulting attempts at investigations and corrective actions, despite assertions to the contrary and public statements that "the event is 50-year old history - we need to move on." There are quite literally pages of lessons to be learned from the disaster of '51, especially when studied and compared with later major outbreaks of cheating, some less well known incidents, and all the associated investigations and corrective actions - and even one incident which was deliberately covered up in the mid-1950s. The major outbreaks of cheating, however painful and uncomfortable when they occur, are nothing

less than battles to defend integrity in the officer corps of the United States Army as well as the honor code and its system at the Academy, which have evolved over a period of 201 years. Please let me reemphasize. This issue is about the future, not the past.

The bases for the foregoing statements are in ten years of research, including research and writing of A Return to Glory, a seven year, 1,118-page project centering on the 1951 honor incident, its disclosure, preliminary and follow-on investigations, corrective action, and the Academy's and Corps' difficult rebuilding in the event's aftermath.

Additionally, during the project, to obtain better perspective and understanding of the unprecedented, long-buried 1951 incident, I comparatively examined the 1976 incident, investigations and follow-on corrective actions, and studied the evolution of the honor code and honor system from the time of the academy's founding in 1802, up through 1950. The entire effort approximated 10,000 hours of work, retrieving and studying literally thousands of pages of board records, executive summaries, official correspondence, messages, staff papers, personal letters, hundreds of newspaper clippings and staff diaries - plus interviews of approximately seventy-five people. A Return to Glory is now in the hands of every Honor Committee and Honor Staff member from the classes of 2002-5, copies purchased by The Center for the Professional Military Ethic and given each committee member to assist in training, education and career development. And I might add, key officers and civilians in key departments at West Point, USNA, USAFA, and the USCGA received donated copies to their offices, for use in case studies as they saw fit, for honor and ethics, leadership, and crisis management.

The only effort, and I'm now convinced, the most important effort absent in all of the foregoing history research is "lessons learned" - the after-action reports, critiques, and recommended improvements and changes that every military command seeks and goes through following exercises, battles and wars. For some strange reason, when the Academy is committed to battling mass outbreaks of

breached integrity - it's "get the answers quickly," "fix the system," and "let's get on with the important mission of educating and developing character in our cadets."

When the 2500 copies of A Return to Glory were published in August 2000, the result was a wave of completely unsolicited, immensely positive reader comments, and by-invitation volunteer work on the honor lesson plans in the 2001-2 Values Education Training Guides. That additional work began in the summer of 2001 and extended into December of that year. Additionally, as a result of Colonel Mike Haith's reading A Return to Glory, he phoned me in June of 2001, the month you arrived at West Point, asking if I would provide him an informal review of the Training Guides, using honor training in 1951 as the basis of comparison. (That was also the month I sent you a copy of my book and you sent me a most gracious note of thanks and expressed your intent to use it to help reeducate yourself on the code and system.)

In November of 2001 I mailed Mike a twenty-six page "desk top" evaluation with twenty-eight recommendations, including their rationale, to strengthen honor training in the next Values Guides revisions. (Enclosure #1) In August 2001, while I was working on the Training Guides and my next book, then Cadet Ryan Booth ('02) - and Mike Haith - invited me to West Point on a one day visit, to deliver a talk to the entire Cadet Honor Committee at the first annual inauguration dinner for the newly elected third class company honor representatives and staff. It was a distinct privilege and a marvelous experience to have the opportunity to meet and talk with the cadets and officers responsible for honor training - a trip I'll never forget.

Before I lay out the facts supporting the first paragraphs of this letter, please let me pause and reintroduce myself. We have met, but only briefly. In addition to writing a complex Korean War era history of the Academy, for nearly six years I've done, and continue to do, volunteer USMA admissions field work with The Meadows School, a privately endowed non-sectarian college prep school here in

Las Vegas.

On Monday, 3 December 2001, I was introduced to you on the front steps of Washington Hall by Cadet Booth, at that time the class of 2002 Chairman of the Cadet Honor Committee. The Corps was marching to noon meal. Inside the dining hall, as they went to their meal tables, the cadets were roaring with excitement. The preceding Saturday Army beat Navy in football. I had arrived two days later for the talk to the Honor Committee.

For me, though I feared honor committee members were in no mood to hear a rather serious talk, it was an unforgettable day and evening. Here was a retired Air Force officer and fighter-bomber pilot who had flown and led combat missions in Vietnam, commanded an Air Force installation, served as Vice Commander of a Tactical Fighter Wing, later served in the Republic of Korea during tumultuous times, and had over the years had little to no contact with Academy graduates or the Academy - until after I retired from the Air Force and went into the defense industry in 1983. Now, I was coming back to talk to the Cadet Honor Committee representatives from 2002-4. In spite of numerous rehearsals in front of my wife and an occasional mirror, a carefully prepared 34 minute talk, which I felt I must read because of the subject's importance (non-toleration, Enclosure #2) and degree of difficulty, I still got sweaty palms - so much so I botched the talk by inadvertently jumping to the second page of the script. The result? I left out the extremely important introductory paragraphs which connected the Korean War, when the 1951 honor incident occurred, and 9/11, established the historical connection between the honor codes and systems of 1951 and 2001, and stressed the challenges to honor that the war on terror would inevitably bring to all young officers.

Having explained our brief meeting, it is with considerable difficulty that I write this letter concerning the issue of the lettermen's plaque on the Blaik statue. As a graduate who has, in the last ten years, studied the Academy's honor code

and honor system in three distinctly different eras stretching over 52 years ('50-'53, '76-'79, and the academic year 2001-2) - and completed a quick study of the evolution of the code and system going back to the Academy's founding - I never dreamed I would have to write a letter like this.

First, with respect to the letterman's plaque, and the men whose twenty-three names would be among 280, not only would you be memorializing men who cheated extensively and repeatedly, but some among those twenty-three who then lied by first conspiring to deny before the Collins Board they knew of any cheating, never mind participated in cheating. One among many lessons that come from examining the 1951 incident closely, is when men (people) become involved in corrupt practices, when they are finally unmasked, their actions will invariably become more venal and destructive.

For example, if you read all the documents surrounding the '51 incident, you would learn that various individuals involved in the cheating ring not only cheated, but lied under oath (22 of the 83 who resigned). A small group of them attempted to intimidate two of the first day's witnesses before the Collins Board. Another group actually planned and executed an attempt to publicly discredit the Collins Board by claiming they weren't read their rights or informed of their right not to incriminate themselves. Some made it a point to find out who "ratted" on them and began efforts during the Collins Board investigation to intimidate and harass the two men who broke the organized cheating open. Some plotted to name - and did name - many totally innocent cadets as being involved. And there is more. What is the significance of this information? When you examine what happened in 1976, the exact same patterns of behavior appeared among those caught in the EE304 incident. The only problem was then superintendent Major General Sidney Berry didn't know any of what occurred in 1951 - and it cost him and the Academy dearly. More about that later.

Now, fast forward to the recent past. I need to call your attention to four of those 23 men who would be on the plaque if it goes as now planned. They are men who steadfastly refused to acknowledge their responsibility in the events of 1951, and have continued to publicly tell half-truths, if not outright lies for 50 years. They are: Mr. Gil Reich, and the late Al Pollard, both ex-'53; Mr. Harold Loehlein and one who must remain nameless unless and until I meet him face to face, both ex-'52. A fifth gentleman who didn't letter and wouldn't be on the plaque, but is an example of the same behavior and was the centerpiece of James Blackwell's book, On Brave Old Army Team. He is retired Air Force Colonel William Jackomis, ex-53. As to the specifics of each case, here they are.

On 13 November 2000, Sports Illustrated magazine published an article titled "Code Breakers" (Enclosure #3) by well-known sports writer and commentator Frank Deford. I received a phone call - plus several calls from others later - from a graduate, a magnificent Army football player - and winner of USMA's best all around athlete award - in the class of 1954, telling me of the article. His name is Lowell Sisson. The article was extremely biased and riddled with errors of fact, one of the worst pieces of sports journalism I've ever read. It clearly demonstrated the writer knew nothing about the honor code or honor system of that era or today, and didn't know anything about what really happened in 1951. Worst of all, Reich, who was the centerpiece in the article, either lied to the writer, or had a more than serious lapse in memory about his role in the events, as did Pollard and Loehlein. The article attacked and proceeded to discredit men who were deceased - primarily the late General Paul Harkins - who had the unpleasant duty of breaking open, exposing, and cleaning up the mess these men and many others were solely responsible for. And there was, in the article, a photograph of Coach Blaik with his son Bob, obviously taken in 1950 during happier times.

Mr. Deford made the classic journalistic error of not checking out or corroborating the interviewees' statements,

either by reviewing records or reading the book just published, as was suggested to him by another key interviewee for the article. The gentleman who suggested he do some reading was the retired Air Force major general who, as a cadet, had accepted the heavy, lifelong burden of reporting the existence of organized cheating and then reluctantly volunteered to participate in the undercover investigation which eventually rooted out the rapidly expanding ring. He's spent the rest of his life hiding his name because of painful and ignorant jabs by people who hadn't the slightest clue as to what happened or what it was all about.

Perhaps I shouldn't have, but I wrote a scorching one-page letter to the SI editor and sent him a copy of *A Return to Glory*, suggesting Mr. Deford read it to learn what really happened in 1951. I also suggested the Academy and its honor code at least deserved equal time. There was never a reply or acknowledgement. *Sports Illustrated* prints millions of copies of each issue, and a classmate's widow overheard a couple in the waiting room of her physician's office talking about the article and the Academy in a less than favorable light. Naively, I believed the article presented an opportunity for the Academy to invite the SI editor to visit West Point and become acquainted with the honor code and honor system - and today's Army football. The idea, suggested to the Academy staff early in 2001, before you arrived at West Point, never went anywhere.

Nine months later Jay Olejniczak, the Assembly editor, published the two-part serial article I had drafted, titled, "The 1951 Honor Incident: Myths Facts, and Lessons," beginning in the November/December 2001 issue. (Enclosure #4) The objectives were to dispel the numerous myths and some outright fabrications that had grown up around the incident, and take head-on some of the too numerous major errors, biases and distortions in Mr. Deford's article. No, I didn't publicly accuse the interviewees of lying - but I can assure you, I now wish I had - because they were.

The case of the man whose name I can't now reveal was different, but the behavior was the same. Our parish associate pastor, a retired Air Force (Colonel) Catholic chaplain was from Pennsylvania and in a conversation at an Air Force-Oregon football game said he loved Army football - used to go to games at West Point and listened to them on the radio. He learned about the book I had written, and said, "Oh - I know one of the men who was thrown out in the scandal. He's right here in our parish - or was. He just knew about the cheating, but didn't cheat. He left for another parish here in town." The good Fr. named him and I recognized the name immediately. My response was, "I hate to tell you, Fr., but that's not the way it was." I said nothing more, either before or after I gave the good Padre a copy of the book to read. The individual was a large donor to the parish, but had left because he felt the parish wasn't responding sufficiently to his wishes after all he had donated.

Colonel Jackomis was another deeply troubling case - because he had graduated from Notre Dame's ROTC program, been commissioned in the Air Force, was retired, and we all want to believe that the men discharged in 1951 went elsewhere, learned from their mistakes, and for those who obtained commissions afterward, would "straighten up and fly right." Nope, not Colonel Jackomis. You will find his story in the 1996 book, On Brave Old Army Team. He too "only knew of the cheating and didn't participate." He lied, Jim Blackwell '74 accepted his story without crosschecking the records, and made him the hero of his book. What's more Colonel Jackomis proudly proclaimed he "shot down a MIG in Vietnam." He didn't. Blackwell, at one point in his book referred to "the 90" as "honor victims." Needless to say his book drew a lot of flak from graduates who lived through that disaster.

Now one more - a retired Army colonel, who wasn't a football player and must remain unnamed also, because I promised him, as I did the two men who broke open organized cheating in 1951, that I would protect his privacy and the good name he struggled to regain all those years.

He was the first man to testify before the Collins Board, and was the individual within the cheating ring who attempted to entice his company mate and classmate into their group. He also helped, unknowingly at first, break open the cheating ring, and thereby became the primary subject in the Collins Board investigation. When he testified before the Collins Board, he was presented with overwhelming evidence gathered in the six weeks undercover investigation. He told the whole truth the first morning of the first day's testimony. That night a group of about twelve, including some of the 23 lettermen in question, held a meeting in the 1st Division of cadet barracks (MacArthur's residence when he was a cadet.). They demanded to know what he had told the board, knowing full well he was not supposed to talk to anyone about his testimony. He at first refused. Then it turned ugly. He and the academic tutor heavily involved in the ring were threatened. Since he was one of only two men on the orders convening the Collins Board, he and the academic tutor were to go back to the board, recant their testimony, lie to the Board, and take the fall for everyone else. He was a bit shaken to say the least. That night he called then Lt. Col. Collins, and told him the story. Collins ensured his safety, and told him he wouldn't have to testify again. The other cadet, who had lied before the Board the first day, asked to come testify again. Collins knew the story and confronted him with the facts. The man finally told the truth after twice lying to the Board.

The retired Army colonel who so graciously gave up that painful story, showed great remorse for what he'd done to his family - but even then held back with the all-important "But...." He is the son of an Academy graduate, who was in 1951, a brigadier general in the Army. His father was not a happy man. The individual in question later earned a commission, went on to serve as a major in Vietnam, receive a regular commission through the intervention of then BGen Richard G. Stillwell '38 - and is personable, warm and friendly, a genuinely nice man. We keep in touch. The "But...?" But he still "...doesn't understand why his friend reported him for the honor violations."

Now let me turn to another subject - "what happened 50 years ago is history. West Point has learned its lessons." In other words the 1951 incident is no longer relevant. "We have a war on. We need to reconcile. Make peace because these old grads have done their bit, and need peace at last." Let me give you some more facts.

As I indicated earlier, the 1951 incident faded quickly out of public view, and almost as quickly into the files and archives - scattered here and there, where they remained for about 45 years until A Return to Glory was published. The Academy steadfastly refused to disclose the names of the men discharged, incurring the wrath of the media. What's more, the Academy, confronted with a full blown crisis after the public announcement, made two attempts to publicly explain the honor code and what had occurred.

The first was a press conference called in which Colonel George A. Lincoln, and then Maj. John Eisenhower attempted to explain the honor code. The article was buried on the back pages of newspapers and given virtually zero coverage elsewhere. The superintendent, General Irving, asked his boss, LTG Maxwell Taylor, if he and a first classman could hold a press conference to make a statement explaining what had occurred, and answer questions. Taylor ran it through the senior Army staff. By that time, press coverage was beginning to trail off and Public Affairs recommended against any more public discussion. General Irving's request was denied.

But guess who didn't stop going public? Coach Blaik and a significant number of men who were being discharged - and that pattern continued right on through until 2000. They all told their version of what happened, year after year, after year. The real story was gone. Buried. People simply wanted it to go away." Let them talk. No harm done. It's all over. They paid the price." Zero lessons learned.

In Coach Blaik's 1974 autobiography, The Red Blaik Story - which I studied, let me reemphasize - studied, because I

wanted to get to know him as best I could and know what he knew about that terrible year. Let me give you just a few sample quotes:

The title of Chapter XV: "The Ninety Scapegoats"

Pg 279: "There was no real need for the cribbing scandal that wrecked West Point football. It could have been settled quickly, quietly, by a reprimand from the superintendent. That was all that would have been needed except in the case of perhaps two of the boys. And they could have been helped by a kick in the pants." Blaik went on to say, "The above is quoted from an interview with General Douglas MacArthur by the well-known newsman and columnist Bob Considine."

Pg 280: "Some cadets were dismissed who had neither taken nor given unauthorized aid, but merely had knowledge of it and had not reported it." Totally inaccurate. Not one single cadet was dismissed who only knew about the cheating but hadn't participated.

Pg 281 "As to their ideals of honor, most of the ninety boys condemned themselves by telling the truth. Since their acts had not involved cheating in the classroom, there was no evidence against most of them." Totally inaccurate. There was hard evidence on every single cadet found guilty and discharged, most provided by other cadets when the ring collapsed. During the Collins Board investigation they disclosed to whom, or from whom they had given or received unauthorized assistance.

Chapter XV, which ends on page 300 is instructive for a whole variety of reasons. Mostly it reflects an absence of facts and knowledge about what really happened, many misguided assumptions, bitter and long held biases, hurt and anger roiling a proud man who had been personally and professionally blind sided, and was used by many of the young men. There's much more in his book, including a steady drumbeat of "the system was the cause;" "they inherited a system of cheating which led them astray;" bitter personal and professional attacks on the senior officers at West Point and in the Army staff who had to face

into and clean up the mess; firmly stated beliefs that other senior officers at West Point envied the football team's success and national attention; a system full of black-and-white-but-no-gray advocates for honor; immature officers investigating the incident. The book also aimed blistering criticism at other senior officers, strong opposition to the concept of reporting others for violations, and greater leniency in meting out punishment (consequences) to men found guilty of honor violations. These words were to have their effect in 1976, when Major General Sidney B. Berry was confronted with another burgeoning scandal, and had to start from scratch in dealing with another major crisis in West Point's history. These same words from Earl Blaik became the crutch for "the 90 scapegoats" to continue attacking "the system" and denying their responsibility in the events of 1951.

Earl Blaik simply didn't know those young men like he thought he did. He was too distant, proud, patrician, and was much like the man he admired the most, General MacArthur. He wanted to be on a pedestal, and wouldn't get close to his players. He didn't know or understand the honor system which General MacArthur officially sanctioned at West Point in 1922, the year he left West Point, and two years after Earl Blaik graduated and left for his assignment at Ft. Bliss, TX. But perhaps most of all, the cadets in trouble used him. Like many young people who are driven, ambitious, they went to the man they believed would do them the most good, save them - and they told him what they wanted him to hear, while he had no access to board proceedings, records, investigative techniques or strategies employed to break what was most assuredly a growing corrupting influence at West Point. I urge you. Get a copy of Earl Blaik's book out of the library and read it.

If you do, pay particular attention to pages 448-449, where he gave the same advice to another superintendent he had given to General Irving and the Hand Board. The superintendent had sought his advice because he faced another outbreak of cheating during the 1955-56 academic year. In that one the football team wasn't involved. When

the superintendent asked for his advice, Blaik in essence said, bury it. "Order the first captain and honor committee chairman to press the matter no further" (He used the term "intramural clean-up" in testimony to the Hand Board in July 1951.) Today, such advice would be called encouraging a "cover up."

Further, as you read it, or even part of it, please keep in mind, Coach Blaik's book was the only "official record" out there until the year 1996 - along with the complaints, excuses, rationalizations, and bitterness among most who fully were, and are, still convinced they were among "The Ninety Scape Goats." Zero lessons learned.

You might reasonably conclude I'm totally opposed to any statue honoring Coach Blaik. Not so. He was a man, a real man, a giant of a man who wanted to be a soldier in his heart, but instead became one of the great all-time college Coach's at Army and in the nation. He often repeated and later wrote, the quotation didn't originate with him, "Football is the game most like war." His mistake was he didn't know how to be a great commander. A great commander doesn't get his heart and soul tangled in his unit or his men (today includes women) and do nothing but vociferously defend the people who are wrongdoers when it's obvious they've committed great wrong. They kick ass, take names, throw the bums out, fire supervisors who knew about it and didn't surface the problem - in short clean it all up. He didn't, and infuriated an already angry set of senior Army officers. Thus was born the anti-Blaik faction of graduates which exists to this day - because he made some serious mistakes beginning on 29 May 1951, after he learned that night what the Collins Board was about.

Fast forward now to 1976, twenty-five years later. General Berry confronts another nightmare. What about all the Academy learned in 1951? He has no records, nothing. When the revelations come he has no institutional memory to pull up, to see what happened in 1951. How did it start, Who was at the core of it all? What might he expect, and how to approach the investigation? Who should do the

investigation? No public affairs record to examine, not a clue as to the nastiness the young men can exhibit when cornered - like deliberately incriminating innocent cadets to make the problem look worse than it really is; deliberately, publicly attempting to discredit the investigation; lying under oath; pointing their fingers at "the system;" going to the media with half-truths, outright lies and distortions. They had done all these things in '51, but no one knew the facts. No full disclosure. Zero lessons learned.

Among the things General Berry does is write retired General Irving soon after the public announcement. It's the letter you'll find on pages 957-8 in A Return to Glory. The absence of an institutional memory and no lessons learned was a tragedy. He first gives the investigation to the Honor Committee, probably hearing that was a blunder and deliberate taking of authority from the Honor Committee in 1951 (a conventional wisdom that grew over the years of disinformation.) The Committee turns out to be corrupt and the people caught up in cheating begin lengthening the list of alleged cheaters. General Berry then takes it out of the hands of the Honor Committee, and to speed up the investigation forms several internal review panels of officers and cadets working in parallel. No common investigatory standards or frame of reference between panels. More accusations about the process. Finally, the Borman Commission, from outside, is called in to look at the whole process and the EE304 incident. It was agonizing, I'm sure.

The fact that '76 wasn't a conspiracy was perhaps the least important criteria to gage the direct, and numerous connections between '51 and '76. People are people. Their failings and reasons for them, and the behaviors and rationalizations which follow, I can assure you, have not changed one iota in the 52 intervening years since 1951. It's all there in the annual surveys right up to today, about cadet attitudes toward and support for honor, the honor code and system. The incident of '51 was, is, and always will be about the future. How so you ask?

West Point is a place, not an institution. It is a marvelous

place filled with marvels of American history. But the institution that resides there is the United States Military Academy, the peoples' Academy. The generations pass through the institution, and the people of those generations are its custodians, not its owners, and they put on their pants one leg at a time, just as everyone else does. Likewise, contrary to the long held beliefs and conventional wisdoms, the honor code and system are the peoples'. They don't belong to Academy graduates (the romanticized Long Gray Line), the Academy, the Department of the Army, and certainly not the Academy administrations which are the code's and system's custodians from one generation to the next. Our obligation is to make damn sure we absorb them, learn and use them, fight like hell to protect them, and hold the standards above reproach, all to provide our young soldiers the best leadership we possibly can. Their mothers, fathers and loved ones expect that of us, absolutely, rightfully demand that of us - the officers. The officer's honor is not optional. We all know the costs of less than honorable behavior by officers, and from day one at Basic Cadet Training, the cadet must know that the honor code is a minimum standard and he/she, above all else is preparing to be an honorable officer. The future. As Winston Churchill said of history and its relationship to the future: "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see"

Now let me turn to some cold hard facts about major outbreaks, or mass violations of honor. Had General Berry had at his disposal a lessons learned file from 1951, and a contingency plan sitting on the shelf, the outcome in 1976 probably would have been quite different. No one was prepared to recognize the depths to which young men will go to get what they want once they get caught with their hands in the cookie jar. But there were no lessons learned from '51, and when General Dave Palmer was selected to be superintendent in 1987, the 1951 incident was still scattered and deeply buried in files at West Point. When he went through the Army staff to be briefed before coming to take command, he was given a thorough rundown on '76. When the briefing was over, he asked, "What about '51?" "Sir, we

don't have anything on that."

When he arrived at the Academy he asked for the files on '51. They were scattered, and he didn't know it, but they were incomplete. He commissioned an academic case study with Colonel Tony Hartle chairing the study. The study group found and used a significant number of references and interviewed a significant number of people. (I have a copy of the study.) But when it was in final form and Tony attempted to coordinate it, out of the woodwork came the two factions of graduates once again battling one another - the anti-Blaik and pro-Blaik factions. The pro-Blaik faction, the men who admired and respected Colonel Blaik, began hearing the anti-Blaik faction threatening to "expose" Coach Blaik's real role in the events of 1951 - saying he either knew about and condoned the cheating at least, or at worst actively aided and abetted.

Bob Blaik, who, with his father had worked through their own brands of anguish and established a closer relationship, was deeply disturbed about the threat to "expose" his father. Bob, accompanied by Mr. Harry Walters, '59, fullback on Coach Blaik's last team at West Point before Blaik retired - and a former assistant secretary of the Army - went to the Army chief of staff's office, where he pleaded the 1990 study be quashed. He made his point, and the chief of staff, not wanting a public quarrel acquiesced. General Palmer was ordered, by phone, to kill the study. Dead, buried, the records and tapes later returned to the interviewees or destroyed. Zero lessons learned.

And ironically about a month ago, one of the men who interviewed for the study encountered General Palmer and learned for the first time, the study had been quashed. For thirteen years, retired LTC Tom McKenna '53, a soldier who had watched his roommate suffer through a lifetime of hiding his own name because of the recriminations he faced for reporting and participating in the undercover preliminary investigation that eventually shattered the cheating ring, learned the study he gave time and energy to,

had been quietly quashed. Not acceptable, Sir. No lessons learned.

And now to the most bitter, and potentially explosive piece of history in this whole sad affair - the money used to purchase the plaque bearing the names of the men who didn't graduate and were found guilty of violating the honor code. The money wasn't from willing donors, and the supposed gift was not a gift at all. It was taken from the account of a deceased graduate from the class of 1951, apparently without the knowledge or approval of the AOG Board of Trustees - and certainly not you. The money was in a trust willed to the Academy and/or AOG, and the deceased's classmate and close friend, who is an attorney serving probably as the administrator - not the executor - later felt "used." As an attorney who had defended the trust in behalf of the AOG, against unwarranted claims, he was asked if he would approve the withdrawal of "approximately \$150,000 to purchase something for the Blaik statue." Whoever made the request, the attorney knew, trusted and thus accepted without question the request's validity - the Blaik statue had been approved. No likely controversy buried in that call. He was in essence victimized by whomever requested the withdrawal, and the attorney, on later learning of the money's controversial use, remarked, his deceased classmate would have never authorized use of the funds for the plaque bearing the 23 names.

I take no joy in bringing this information to your attention. I've seen quite enough of this kind of thing in my lifetime. But implications of this final matter are enormous and potentially catastrophic for both the AOG and the Academy - unless immediate and forceful actions are taken to declare that part of the gift agreement with respect to the plaque bearing the lettermen's names null and void, and firm insistence that the money be reimbursed to the trust account. This letter, with all its hard facts and useful history provides you with a golden opportunity to sharply and constructively alter the Academy's present course, and favorably affect the Academy's future for years to come.

From this point, a plan of unifying reforms and corrective actions can immediately follow the reversed decision, easily explained with this newly surfaced information. We can all learn from the mistakes of the past. Graduates' donations could easily be solicited to purchase a replacement plaque with a far more comprehensive, positive and uplifting description of the achievements of Earl Henry "Red" Blaik. Reforms can and should include an immediate moratorium on memorializing living graduates, followed by a study and modification of the "special gifting process," fund raising, commemoration, and memorialization policies and practices, to realign them with the Academy mission and Army policies governing at every other Army installation in the world. You could activate a history and memorialization research team to learn all the names of graduates who've already been memorialized at West Point, and then begin developing a list of all the wonderful graduates who've not been memorialized, complete with well researched looks at their lives. When a donor proffers a gift destined to be named, present him/her with the list, and let them choose a name. That way the superintendent and the Academy sets the naming conditions and lessens his and the Academy's exposure to strong-willed, powerful donors more interested in personal fame and recognition. I'd wager you next years pay - well maybe next month's pay, if you did this the American public would jump at the opportunity to pick a good name from a long list of names, and be proud to do it. Now is the perfect time turn the Academy away from high pressure, high risk of corruption policies and practices which now exist and are sources of division, clique formation, and anger.

Next, kick off a lessons learned study of every major outbreak of cheating, beginning with 1951. An objective lessons learned study, jointly done by graduates, faculty, and cadets wanting to learn about these incidents, and perhaps receive academic credit in the process, might very well be funded by the AOG. Results could be folded into the history of the honor code now being written by Aberjona Press, and a contingency plan could be laid permanently on

the superintendent's desk on how to prevent and/or confront a major outbreak of cheating - and confront anyone found guilty of honor violations who even remotely attempts to rationalize or justify his/her actions.

And now I must add one more thing to this already far too long letter. I just completed writing a book titled, On Hallowed Ground - The Last Battle for Pork Chop Hill. It's sponsored by the Association of the United States Army, and is to be published by Naval Institute Press in September. It's about the 6-11 July battle for the outpost, which was abandoned and now sits in the northern half of the DMZ. In that desperate fight which began three weeks before the truce was signed, 243 American soldiers were killed in action, another 916 were wounded, some maimed for life. At least 9 more were captured the first 24 hours of the battle, and fortunately came home during Operation Big Switch. In addition, as many as 15 ROK soldiers (Korean Augmentees to the US Army - KATUSAs) were killed, another 129 wounded, and 17 missing.

Among the Americans killed were Lieutenants Richard T. Shea, Jr. and Richard G. Inman, both class of '52. Their stories are in A Return to Glory. Dick Inman played on the 1951 football team which went 2-7, suffering the consequences of the actions of 83 men, including 37 from the 1950 team - who by their actions brought what Earl Blaik would later describe a catastrophe to the Academy and Army football. Dick Shea, of course, everyone at West Point knows was the captain of Army's track team and one of two Medal of Honor winners on Pork Chop Hill. Shea Stadium bears his name. Dick Inman's name is also on a memorial plaque near the stadium, provided by the class of '52. Dick was on the 1952 Army track team also, and one of four men on a championship high hurdle relay team - with Lowell Sisson - in the '52 Penn Relays. Why do I mention all this, aside from the fact the code and system really does belong to the American people and their sons and daughters they loan to this nation's armed forces?

Dick Inman's name. His widow, now deceased, was

awarded his Silver Star and Purple Heart, second oak leaf cluster, in Indianapolis, Indiana, on 6 July 1954. Had not Dick Inman's classmates put his name on the bronze plaque at Shea Stadium, along with others from his class - where would we or the public ever see his name at West Point? Nowhere. Nowhere to be found at West Point are all the names of the now nearly 1,300 Academy graduates killed in action in all wars this nation has fought since 1802 - including the young officers who just died in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Some of the graduated dead are on Battle Monument - the Civil War Federal dead. Some are in Cullum Hall, where the Medal of Honor winners are memorialized. Others are scattered elsewhere, not all that many. We should sing their praises - the killed in action above all. They gave it all, and are the heart of the Long Gray Line.

What about the names of all those who suffered the wounds of war? The numbers probably total 5,000 or more, some maimed for life. Do we know them? We don't but we should.

So, Sir, why are we putting the names of 23 men on Earl Blaik's statue who didn't graduate and sullied the honor code, the nation's oldest and most revered Military Academy, and its football team - and brought personal and professional anguish to the man who stayed the course afterward, and brought Army football back in three seasons? Not only, no, Sir, but hell no - tell that to General Christman and Mr. Hammack - and tell them "no more." We will first put up a wall of honor with the names of every graduate who gave his life in battle in all the nation's wars - and that's just for starters.

This is about the future, not the past. This is about the integrity - the honor - of the individual officer and the officer corps, and more importantly the young men and women who must receive the best from us. They clearly deserve not one bit less.

I ask your indulgence for the length of this letter and the

accompanying material, however I believed it necessary to provide you as many of the pertinent facts in this matter as feasible.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Very respectfully,

**Bill McWilliams
2229 Fiero Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89134
Ph: (702) 363-6968; Fax: (702) 256-6051
e-mail: bill.ronnie.mcw@worldnet.att.net**

**cc: Thomas B. Dyer III
Chairman, AOG
W/O Enclosures**

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**BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE ON "THE BLAIK
STATUE LETTER" DATED 20 MAY 2003, TO LTG
WILLIAM J. LENNOX, JR., SUPERINTENDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

The events I became involved in that caused the writing of the foregoing letter occurred initially at the urging of members of the West Point class of 1953, on 5 May 2003, when the class was approaching its 50th reunion and in March had discovered inadvertently what was about to happen.

At the time of the discovery by members of the class of 1953, Lieutenant General William J. Lennox, Jr., was Superintendent of the Academy. General Lennox's immediate predecessor was Lieutenant General Daniel P. Christman. The Chairman of the Association of Graduates (AOG) was Mr. Thomas P. Dyer III, class of 1967, and his

predecessor was Mr. John A. Hammack, class of 1949.

The statue of Army's legendary head football coach, Earl H. "Red" Blaik, class of 1920, without a plaque surrounding its pedestal, was already in place in the Kimsey Center, when members of the class learned of the statue, the bronze plaque that would be wrapped around the statue's pedestal and the intent to put all of Coach Blaik's lettermen's names on the plaque, including those discharged under less than honorable conditions in 1951 for cheating in academics. The statue, a \$300,000 gift to the Academy, intended to honor Coach Blaik, who died in 1989, and his achievements in 18 years of service at West Point, would become a 2003 flashpoint, that nearly became another national scandal.

The 1951 cheating incident, as it would be formally labeled by the Army and the Academy, had been an unprecedented and explosively controversial occurrence in Academy history that literally became a national scandal. The incident, announced to the press on Friday, 3 August 1951, one month after our new Plebe class arrived to enter "Beast Barracks," resulted in an avalanche of adverse nation-wide press coverage and had triggered an internal investigation at the end of the previous May, by a board of three Academy graduates and officers on active duty at West Point, all World War II veterans, who brought findings of guilty for 94 cadets, with 22 of the 94 also found guilty of false swearing. After review of all cases by a second board of officers and the Army's Judge Advocate General, 83 cadets total from the classes of 1952 and 1953, including 37 then-still-active or former Army football players, were given less than honorable discharges, officially called "general discharges," under the Articles of War still in effect at that time. The incident had devastating and demoralizing effects on the Academy and its cadets, and Army football, when all but two returning 1951 Army varsity lettermen were discharged from a previously, highly-and-nationally-respected team considered by sports writers to be in contention for another mythical national championship the fall of that year.

The \$300,000 value of the gift, and its concept, resulted in General Christman's decision, prior to 2003, to pursue approval of the gift, which, under Academy policy, required him to obtain Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army approval before accepting the contribution.

What occurred when the statue was found in March 2003, is a clear illustration and reflection of the controversy stirred in 1951 and the powerful emotions that echoed down through the intervening 52 years regarding the West Point honor code and system, and the meanings the word honor engenders in West Point's graduates.

As a result of the discovery of the Blaik statue, and its origin and concept, the 1953 class vice president, Edward P. Andrews, eventually led a concentrated and growing e-mail and letter-writing campaign against the project, a campaign that spread into many downstream classes and drew intense and sometimes-heated e-mails, letters and phone calls to General Lennox, who had had the responsibility for the project's final approval passed to him for action when General Christman retired.

Ed Andrews and about 79-80 men from several classes had drafted and were circulating an e-mail to General Lennox asking the project be stopped. The e-mail included a quotation from my first book, A Return to Glory, a quotation they were unsure about, and Ed was kind enough to ask on 5 May 2003 that I approve its use in their e-mailed letter, as well as review it for accuracy. The quotation did need a slight correction, I adjusted the quotation and returned it to him, granting permission to use it in their e-mailed letter. He then asked me to join in signing the letter, and I did. From that point forward I became evermore deeply involved in the controversy.

The e-mails, letters and phone calls that followed didn't stop General Lennox. He was obligated to continue the project because General Christman, and Mr. Jack Hammack, the former recently retired AOG CEO, and

just-announced 2003 Distinguished Graduate Award recipient, and other AOG officers had signed or coordinated on a contract with the fund raisers for the statue, a group that included Bob Blaik, the coach's son, and others.

I didn't realize it at the time, but General Lennox faced not only two problems, but four. If he stopped 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 already had been approved in concept by the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army, and had to be approved a second time, perhaps, only at West Point, once the product could be examined in final detail.

Facts I was able to find suggested that General Lennox had probably gone forward for final approval – if it was required, overriding the faculty's Museum, Historical and Memorialization Committee (MHM) recommendation against approval. The chairman of the MHM at that time was the Professor and Head of the History Department, Colonel Lance Betros, class of 1977. Not only that, the fund raisers, were apparently falling short of the \$300,000 needed, and, in the period 5-20 May a 1951 graduate and retired former attorney, Seldon P. Graham, Jr., informed me in a series of e-mail exchanges that someone, whose name he couldn't reveal, had taken \$150,000 from a deceased classmate's estate to help fund the Blaik statue. (As further investigation would later reveal, that amount was in error, 50% overstated.)

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

The growing resistance to the Blaik statue as conceived at that time was directly attributable to Ed Andrews and his 1953 classmates' intense efforts to cause the reversal of General Lennox's decision. As examples, Bert E. Tucker, class of 1956, came on line 8 May and stated voluntarily he would publicize the names of the men discharged in 1951 if the decision were not reversed. Peter Joel Vann, also class of 1956, one of Army's great quarterbacks (now deceased), a 1954 second team All-American on Army's football team, 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 voices, including retired senior Army of officers who were Academy graduates were stating their opposition to General Lennox's decision.

From 5 May forward, after signing Ed Andrews' letter to General Lennox I began to follow the unfolding events with increasing interest and deepening concern. As a graduate I had a discomfoting 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 well familiar with Department of Defense policies on gifts to military organizations and installations from private individuals and corporations. I had also obtained and 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 on the Blaik statue, had made at least one other senior general officer and Academy graduate and AOG Trustee from the class of 1944, express his intent to let his son take the issue to the New York Times, where his son was employed, 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 be disastrously explosive.

An alternative proposal was circulating among graduates suggesting there be no names on the pedestal's bronze plaque, that in their place, agreed to information should be placed on the plaque 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, wanted him honored with the statue, but were strongly or unalterably opposed to letting the discharged cadets be honored with their names on the bronze plaque and statue intended to honor Coach Blaik at West Point.

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

On or about 10 May 2003, I began drafting the foregoing letter to General Lennox, intending to copy Mr. Dyer, the AOG CEO, and mail it, if events convinced me it had to be mailed.

By 20 May, the letter's date, I knew General Lennox had already briefed the Board of Trustees telling them he was going ahead with the statue, and he had done the same at the annual AOG leadership conference on or about 17 May. When I learned of the briefing to the leadership conference, I accelerated the time spent on the letter, which quickly mounted toward more than 24 hours, most of it the final five to seven days, before it was mailed on Tuesday 27 May.

During the period 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 send the letter to his quarters, not wanting his staff to have first access to the letter or its contents, for fear they wouldn't let him see it until they "staffed it" to recommend to him how to respond, or instead drafted a response for him.

It was also at that point 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 been apparently unpersuasive, so decided it had to be made public among Academy graduates almost simultaneously - on the AOG net and to as many class nets and individuals I knew as possible, and so informed John Calabro '68, Vice President for Alumni Support in the AOG, the morning of 30 May. (Ironically, John, since deceased, was a former English instructor at the Academy, and was on the Bicentennial Planning Group that unanimously approved the manuscript for *A Return to Glory* as a Bicentennial Book in February 2000.) John called me on the phone and attempted to talk me out of releasing the letter on the internet. I replied, "Let me think it over and I'll call you back." 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 same day, Friday the 30th, about 1:30 in the afternoon Pacific time, Ronnie, my wife, had gone to the grocery store and I was home on the computer, when the phone rang. It was Mr. Jack Hammack. I believed he was calling from Dallas, TX, but could have been wrong, as I never asked him. I'd never met him personally so was more than surprised when he called. After introducing himself and pausing for a moment, his opening words were, "You know, you told an untruth about me." I stammered a bit because he caught me off guard and was uncertain what he was talking about. In response I asked "What do you mean I told an untruth about you?" His reply, "You know, in the

last few paragraphs of your letter to General Lennox."

Then I realized what he was alleging. My reply was straightforward. "Mr. Hammack, that's not true, because when I wrote that letter, I didn't know who pulled that money from the estate. But you have just solved the problem for me. Thank you very much. Reread the letter and you will see clearly. When I wrote that letter, I did not know who had taken the money from the estate." He had quite literally disclosed who had taken the \$100,000 from the estate, and immediately recognized he had blundered. We spoke for about 45 minutes.

The rest of the conversation did not go well, except for brief moments when one of us managed to interject some humor, and laughter relieved the tension. 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 told him rather profanely, "West Point doesn't know what the (blank) they're taking about." His reply, a seeming laugh, then, "You know, we could be [or could have been] friends." Matters began to cool down a bit, but the real shocker came shortly thereafter, at the last of the phone conversation, when after a pause he said, "I want to ask you a question." Another pause. "Will you withdraw your letter?" Without hesitation my answer came, an abrupt, emphatic and blunt, "No!" That quickly ended the conversation on a stunning note. The gall and arrogance exhibited by the question, following his opening accusatory opening remarks and the realization he had given himself away with a mind-numbing blunder left me filled with questions I never asked him.

Was the request to withdraw the letter simply for Mr. Hammack's sake? Or did he talk with the AOG officers, or maybe even General Lennox? I don't know and will never know for certain. My suspicion is it was for him only, or maybe for him and the AOG officers, who perhaps misread the letter also and believed they could intimidate me into withdrawing the letter because I'd "told an untruth" about Mr. Hammack and the \$150,000 instead of the \$100,000 he

actually took from the estate, an act the AOG officers apparently acquiesced to.

Over the weekend I was totally immersed in transmitting the letter via e-mails and replying to e-mails that began arriving, some asking permission to forward copies to specific individuals, including many retired senior officers and graduates. I responded affirmatively to all such requests.

The following Monday, 2 June, the phone started ringing and the volume of e-mails increased. Several senior Army officers, some I had met while a student at the Army War College in 1972-73, called to extend their compliments for what the letter had said. We also received at least one angry phone call from a graduate – apparently – who didn't identify himself. He had some unkind words to first say to Ronnie, then let me know the wrong I had done. The relentless pace of e-mails and phone calls continued all week, and I made certain I answered every e-mail and answered callers' requests and comments.

On 5 June, John Calabro called back to tell me I had an error in an e-mail I'd sent or forwarded, that contrary to what my e-mail said, that "...Tom Dyer, the AOG CEO didn't go on the West Point Forum pleading for support of General Lennox, that he wouldn't do that..." I apologized and conceded I should have called Mr. Dyer to confirm the accuracy of the retransmitted remark.

A typical day in all that followed, was 8 June when I answered 21 e-mails regarding the letter to General Lennox and related subjects. On 9 June 12 e-mails were sent in response to comments or questions, including responses to Bill Golden, class of 1957 and John Blanco, class of 1974.

On Tuesday, 10 June, I learned from a retired senior general officer via e-mail that the AOG had withdrawn their proffer to the group offering the gift, 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 clear indication, General Lennox had reversed his decision regarding placement of the statue at West Point with the lettermen's names on the plaque. The same day, I received a call informing me that Bill Taylor, class of 1970 and an Academy trustee, and his wife were coming into Las Vegas the next day, and he wanted to meet me, that he had some questions. I spent two hours preparing a paper to give him, and Ronnie and I left for the Monte Carlo Casino the next morning at 6:10 a.m. We conversed for 2 ¾ hours, answering numerous questions.

The flow of e-mails, calls and letters didn't slow in the next seven days. Then on Thursday, 19 June, I received an e-mail query from Mr. Wayne Hall, a reporter for the Newburgh Times Herald-Record newspaper. Mr. Hall had acquired a copy of the letter to General Lennox, and he wanted to know if I had any comments about the letter. His unexpected query surprised me, but the wording clearly indicated he was attempting to gather additional information. My reply was, "I have nothing further to add. The letter speaks for itself." Within thirty minutes I forwarded a summary of the press contact and Mr. Hall's query and my reply to him, to the Academy's Public Affairs Officer and John Calabro at the AOG.

On Monday, 23 June, 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 to me that I didn't record in my written records, Mr. Hall wanted to know who had taken the money from the deceased graduate's estate. In response I reminded him forcefully and 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, under such circumstances, 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 fund-raisers threatened to sue the AOG 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, and now resides at the National Collegiate Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana, where Coach Earl "Red" Blaik had already been enshrined years earlier.

The same year, in the fall of 2003, reforms were undertaken at the AOG 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 the largest sums of money to the AOG, with AOG officers nominated by and voted in by the appointed Trustees, and was the system that eventually spawned the corrupt practices that this incident evidenced. The woman who led that reform effort is the present Vice Chairman of the AOG, Ellen W. Houlihan, class of 1982.

I had learned clearly that the letter to General Lennox, finally stopped the Blaik Lettermen's Plaque, and the statue, but it's pure supposition for me to conclude that it also caused the reforms in the AOG. Perhaps it did, but there is no way either General Lennox or the AOG Chairman was going to disclose the contents of the letter to anyone working the governance problem. General Lennox did call me very briefly one day during his deliberations after the letter arrived at the end of May, to ask how many names on the proposed plaque would be men discharged for honor violations in 1951. Answer: 23. A very brief conversation.

As a matter of additional interest, those 23 names had been 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.

On 1 November 2013, I established contact with Ellen Houlihan through the AOG, and sent her an e-mailed copy of the 20 May 2003 letter, and asked if she had ever seen or heard of the letter. In reality, I look back and realize I was trying to selfishly salve some of the bruises I took in the whole 2003 affair, plus the blowback from the "Code Breakers" movie in 2005, which was also based on the book, A Return to Glory. I wanted to feel I'd caused the AOG reforms, too. She hasn't answered and probably never will. It's unlikely she ever saw or heard of the letter.

Respectfully submitted,

**William D. "Bill" McWilliams, III, USAF (ret), West Point
Class of 1955**

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