



INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 4, December 2023

Three-Legged Stool Award

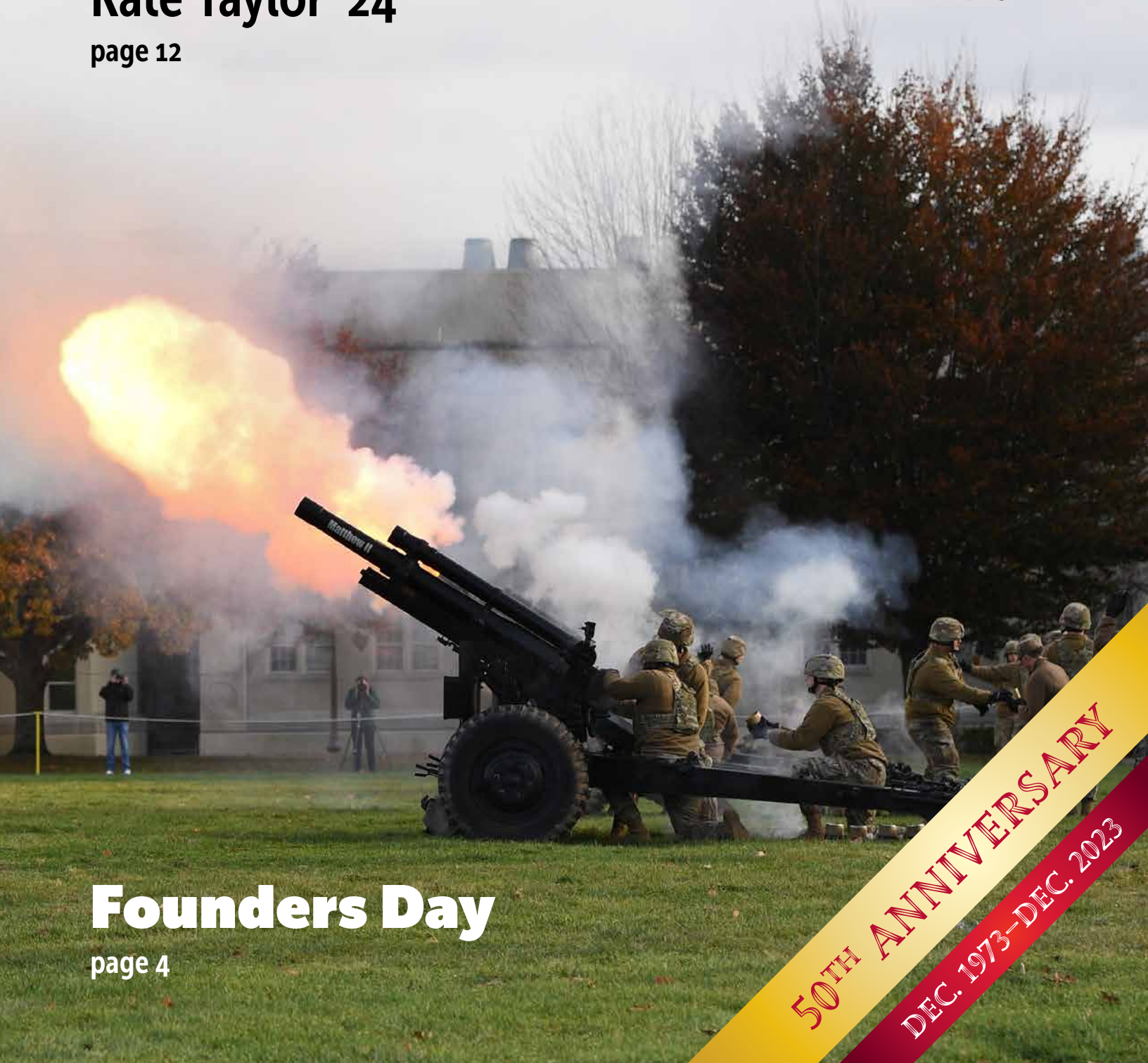
Kate Taylor '24

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Ring Figure

Class of 2025

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Founders Day

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50TH ANNIVERSARY
DEC. 1973-DEC. 2023

50 Years of the Institute Report: Famous Visitors

By Marianne Hause

The Institute Report officially turns 50 Dec. 14. To celebrate the anniversary, milestones, unique news features, and Institute enhancements covered throughout the five decades are being highlighted in each issue during the 2023–24 academic year. Famous visitors to VMI are being highlighted in this issue.

For history buffs who want to test their memories, trivia questions follow the article. Answers are found on the inside of the back cover.

1976—Twenty-two cadets served as honor guard for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at the Charlottesville airport during their visit to Virginia in July to commemorate the U.S. bicentennial.

The Honorable John W. Warner, former Secretary of the Navy, delivered the principal address at the Founders Day convocation. Being a Marine veteran, he also attended the Marine Corps birthday party.

1977—Charles Kuralt, CBS News correspondent and host of “On the Road,” visited post to film an episode on Bill “The Bugler” Swihart, long-time VMI bugler.

1979—Famed radio and television broadcaster, Hugh Downs, came to post to film a documentary on the life of Gen. George C. Marshall, VMI Class of 1901, as part of a series on great Americans for “American Lifestyles.” The series was hosted and narrated by Downs.

1982—Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh Jr., former member of the VMI Board of Visitors, gave the principle address on Founders Day.

1992—Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spoke to more than 4,000 in Cameron Hall as part of the H.B. Johnson Jr. Class of 1926, Distinguished Lecture Series.

1993—Gen. Colin L. Powell, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke at the annual George C. Marshall ROTC Award Seminar.



Upon his arrival to post in 2001, former President Jimmy Carter shakes hands with then-superintendent Lt. Gen. Josiah Bunting III '63.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

1996—Former President George H.W. Bush spoke as part of the H.B. Johnson Jr. Class of 1926, Distinguished Lecture Series.

1997—Dr. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, former U.S. representative to the United Nations (first woman to serve in that office) and member of the Cabinet of President Ronald Reagan, spoke to the Corps of Cadets in October.

The Very Rev. John A. Simpson, Dean of England's Canterbury Cathedral, was keynote speaker at a ceremony to establish the Jonathan Myrick Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award.

1999—Balfa Toujourns, one of the most important traditional bands in the U.S., presented a workshop on Cajun culture, and the role of music and oral tradition in maintaining the continuity of a traditional culture in the modern world.

2000—Judith Martin, author of the popular “Miss Manners” syndicated newspaper column spoke on the topic of civility.

2001—Former President Jimmy Carter became the first recipient of the Jonathan Myrick Daniels '61 Humanitarian

See Famous Visitors, page 14



Former President George H.W. Bush is escorted by cadets from a helicopter on the Parade Ground in 1996.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

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Director	Col. Bill Wyatt
Editor	Lt. Col. Michelle Ellwood
Assistant Editor	Kelly Nye
Designer	Robbin Youngblood
Institute Report Staff	
	Marianne Hause
	H. Lockwood McLaughlin
	Andrew Partridge '24
	Lexie West
Back Cover Photo	
	Kelly Nye

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On the cover: The Cadet Battery fires the howitzers for Founders Day.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.


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VMI Celebrates Founders Day, Honors Alumnus

By Marianne Hause

VMI celebrated the 184th anniversary of its founding one day early. It was on Nov. 11, 1839, when 23 young Virginians were mustered into the service of the state and, in falling snow, the first cadet sentry—John B. Strange of Scottsville—took his post.

This year's celebration was observed with a full schedule of events beginning with Rat Olympics held in the Corps Physical Training Facility.

Members of the Corps of Cadets, along with faculty, staff, alumni, and special guests, joined together in Cameron Hall in the afternoon to honor Conrad M. Hall '65 as recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, VMI Foundation's highest honor. First presented in 1969, the Distinguished Service Award recognizes alumni and friends whose service to the Institute, dedication to the mission of the VMI Alumni Agencies, and career achievements and distinctions are exceptionally commendable. Hall is the 76th recipient of the award.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, opened the ceremony by welcoming guests and cadets, and sharing that Founders Day is a day to remember VMI's beginnings and to look to the future. "Society and education have changed in the past two centuries, and VMI continues to remain at the forefront of modern education," he said. Wins reported that opportunities for cadets have expanded beyond Limits Gates, and cadets are able to study and research all over the world. "We are committed to this education model because we

know it is grounded on a firm foundation and has proven effective."



Conrad M. Hall '65 takes review of the Founders Day parade with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



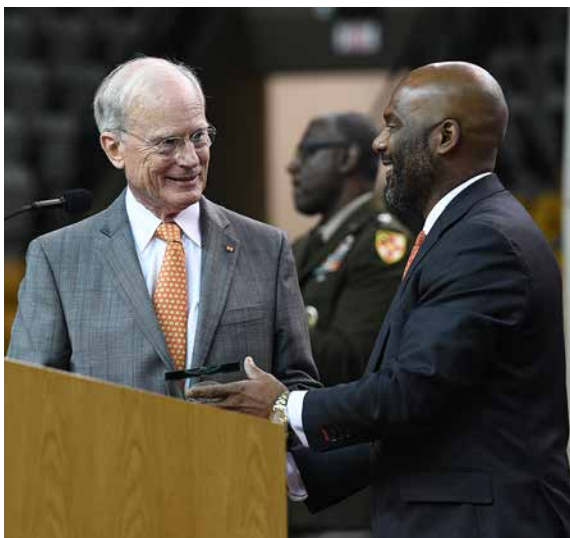
Cadets step off for the Founders Day parade Nov. 10.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Wins continued by stating that VMI graduates are successful because of the focus on the important fundamentals that will never change. "We focus on the values upon which VMI is built: Honor, excellence, self-discipline, courage, esprit de corps, resilience, and selfless service." He then invited Ernesto V. Sampson '98, VMI Foundation president, to join him on the stage to introduce Hall.

Sampson shared that he has known Hall a long time, and is someone whose dedication and service to his country, his state, his community, and the Institute are truly exemplary. To the cadets he advised, "All of us have engaged in emulation. We see someone living and working by consistently high standards of conduct of character and we want to be like him or her. Often the most powerful advice we receive is unspoken, but a life well lived. If you are seeking someone to emulate throughout the rest of your life, and your cadet experience, Conrad Hall is a fantastic choice." To the

entire audience he said, "I've seen Conrad apply his talents and experience to the work of VMI and the betterment of our cadets. I've heard him speak forcefully about VMI to our state and our country, therefore it is my privilege to present him with the Foundation's highest honor." He then welcomed Hall to join him at the lectern and read the citation of the Distinguished Service Award extolling Hall's achievements.

Hall majored in civil engineering at VMI, and was a Distinguished Military



Conrad M. Hall '65 receives the Distinguished Service Award from Ernesto Sampson '98 in Cameron Hall Nov. 10.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Continued on next page



Cadets march in the Founders Day parade Nov. 10.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Graduate. He commissioned into the U.S. Army where he served as an air defense artillery officer from 1966–1968, a portion of that time spent with the 38th Artillery Brigade of 8th Army in the Republic of Korea. After receiving a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Virginia in 1970, Hall joined Landmark Communications, Inc., and remained with the company and its affiliates until his retirement in 2009. From 1989–2009, Hall was CEO of Dominion Enterprises and was responsible for its transformation into a leading national media, internet, and marketing information services company that served employment, automotive, real estate, marine, recreation, and industrial markets in the U.S. and internationally. Under his leadership, Dominion created more than 20 market-leading websites, including AutoTrader.com, ForRent.com, and YachtWorld.com. In addition, the company published more than 500 magazine titles with a combined monthly circulation of 2 million copies.

Hall has served many civic and charitable organizations in Virginia, including Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk, and the ACCESS College Foundation. A staunch advocate of the advancement of higher education throughout the commonwealth, he served on the governing boards of Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, and Eastern Virginia Medical School, and established a chair in American constitutional history at Norfolk State University, and a chair in surgical oncology at Eastern Virginia Medical School. His lifelong interest in American history prompted him to serve on the boards of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Colonial Williamsburg Company, and the Virginia Historical Society. He also authored a book on the history of Mathews County titled, "A Select History of Mathews County, Virginia: 17th, 18th & 19th Centuries and the Family of Ann and Robert Hall."



The Distinguished Service Award has been presented by the VMI Foundation since 1969.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



The Cadet Battery fires 13 rounds from the howitzers during the Founders Day parade.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Hall joined the Board of Trustees of the VMI Foundation in 1995 and served as a trustee for a total of 17 years. He was the VMI Foundation's president from 2002 to 2004 and in that role, an ex-officio member of the boards of the VMI Alumni Association and the VMI Keydet Club. He was a founder and the inaugural chairman of VMI Investment Holdings, LLC. He joined the VMI Board of Visitors in 2014 and served until 2022. A consistent donor to VMI since 1965, he has given in support of various programs. He established the Elsie and Otey Williams Hall Scholarship in memory of his parents and the Conrad M. Hall '65 Chair in American Constitutional History in 2017. He also was the vice chairman of VMI's fundraising campaign, "An Uncommon Purpose: A Glorious Past, A Brilliant Future," and is an inaugural member of the cabinet of the Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III 1962 Endowment for Academic Excellence.

With humility, gratitude and thanks, Hall accepted the award. He opened his acceptance speech with humor and encouragement for the rats in attendance. "Allow me to set the record straight.

Early on in my cadetship, I received invitations to appear before the Rat Disciplinary Committee, which in those days met on the

convenient hour of midnight. I was called into my faculty advisor's office, and he explained to me in no uncertain terms that my academic performance had been less than satisfactory. And in fact, I had been a great disappointment to the civil engineering department," he quipped to the delight of the audience.

In seriousness and somber words, he remembered all who served in the military, and members of VMI alumni who lost their lives in war. He shared VMI's rich history of a young Francis Smith, who at the age of 27 was faced with the daunting responsibility of creating a new school. "His responsibilities were being the equivalent of a college president, as well as commandant. He was in charge of administration,

Conference Focuses on 'Leading During Crisis'

By Marianne Hause

The 14th annual Leadership and Ethics Conference was held Oct. 30–31 in Marshall Hall. This year's theme was "Leading During Crisis: Culture, Conflict, Collaboration," and attracted students from across the country. The conference focused on the challenges of adapting to personal and organizational crises with courage and integrity as an individual and as a leader.

Nearly 200 participants, with students from many colleges, universities, and military academies including Christopher Newport University, East Tennessee State University, Hampden-Sydney College, Liberty University, Mary Baldwin University, Norwich University, Texas A&M University, The Citadel, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, U.S. Military Academy, University of North Georgia, Virginia Tech, as well as many VMI cadets, gathered to hear inspirational speakers, participate in collaborative activities, and to network. Central to the conference's programming were small group discussions and speakers focusing on crisis leader self-assessment, behavioral adaptability, crisis preparation, communication planning and execution, and building effective teams.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, VMI superintendent, welcomed attendees on Monday morning and challenged them to learn how leaders and their followers can build strong teams that anticipate and prepare for the complexity of crises of any kind, whether man-made, natural, or even slowly evolving ones. "Over the next two days, you will learn about yourselves, and how to examine crisis leadership through culture, preparedness, and response," Wins said.

The speaker kicking off the conference was the H.B. Johnson Jr., Class of 1926 Distinguished Speaker, Eric McNulty, associate director of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative at Harvard University. McNulty is an expert in leadership, crisis management, and negotiation, and co-author of numerous books, including "You're It: Crisis, Change, and How to Lead When it Matters Most," and author of "Three Critical Shifts in Thinking for the Evolving Leader" and "Your Critical First 10 Days as a Leader."

McNulty opened by declaring the world is currently in interesting times—which is a curse. "We have a war in Europe, the Middle East is on fire, the U.S. has set yet another record for billion dollar-plus disasters resulting from natural hazards, and we've got political polarization." He stated that throughout history there are periods of relative calm, instability, and prosperity, and he believes the world is moving toward a time of more disruption. He counseled the students in the audience, that whether they serve in the military



James McEneaney '26 shakes hands with Cmdr. Kirk Lippold during a book signing in Gillis Theater Oct. 31.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

or work in the civilian world, they will face a much greater set of disruptions, and as such must master the dimensions of meta leadership.

Meta leadership as McNulty defined it, is being able to look at the big picture, and take in the broader view. He stated there are three dimensions of meta leadership: the person, the situation, and connectivity. In explaining the first dimension he said, "We are all different and lead differently, so you need to understand who you are as a leader, be

comfortable with yourself, and know your strengths and weaknesses." He described great leaders as having character, integrity, and being trustworthy. They listen well and care for others, and invest in the mission and the success of others. He shared a graphic of what he called the "Double Helix of Self" with his polished side of self on one side of the helix, where he listed his accomplishments and achievements, and on the other side he listed parts of his life that were disappointments and heartbreaks. "When you lead, embrace both sides of your helix. That's where your strength comes from, it's who you are, and gives you empathy. Pretending you have no vulnerabilities, makes you more vulnerable," he shared.

In explaining the second dimension of meta leadership—the situation—McNulty introduced a diagram called the "Pop-Doc Loop," a continuous process model that flows through six cognitive properties: perceive (seek verifiable evidence, get input from others), orient (look for patterns, discern order from chaos), predict (understand possible future challenges, forecast possible outcomes), decide (make decisions,



Eric McNulty speaks in Gillis Theater Oct. 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Continued on next page

act), operationalize (What's needed to carry out the decision? What role will partners play?), communicate (provide routine updates, work to understand consequences), and back again to perceive. He explained that the model assumes leaders are not perfect, and it is designed to allow for updates, corrections, and improvements.

Connectivity, the third dimension of meta leadership, is about bringing people together in unity of purpose and actions. "Leading is all about trust-based relationships. Keep your emotions and ego under control. Train your people to do their jobs well, and to work together," he advised.

McNulty closed by reminding his listeners of what's not at stake in dealing with stressful crises. "When I go home at the end of the day, my dog is always there wagging his tail to greet me. He doesn't care if I had a great day or a lousy day, he is just happy to see me. Your family and friends will always be there to love and support you. That is what is truly important."

VMI alumnus Kevin Black '99, veteran U.S. Army officer, executive coach, and strategic advisor, spoke on "Behavioral Adaptability." He opened by asking his audience, "What is the primary driver for a crisis?" After a few responses, Black boldly declared, "It's humans. Think about COVID. The reaction to COVID was worse than COVID itself. Why is the reaction to a crisis always worse than the crisis? Because of human complexity and personality."

To illustrate his point, Black displayed a picture of a multi-layer cake, and listed examples of layers of a human personality. "Perception, culture, environment, ego, life experiences, religion, philosophy, worldview, psychology, all these factors affect how a person reacts to chaos." He continued by noting there are two fundamental orientations to leadership: mission-oriented leaders who are focused on the goal and want to win at all costs, and people-oriented leaders, who are focused on engaging with people and gaining trust through relationships. Every leader has a behavioral profile that leans one way or the other, often changing in a seesaw fashion, depending on the situation.

Black concluded by stating that everyone is unique and comes to their leadership roles with their own perspectives. "If we were all tasked with writing a book about sharks, no two books would be the same. Remember that as a leader. The people you lead will all be different, and as a leader, you must be mindful of that with your leadership style."

Jan Rader, retired fire chief for the city of Huntington, West



Jan Rader thanks the audience after her talk in Gillis Theater Oct. 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Virginia, and first woman to reach the rank of chief for a career department in the state of West Virginia, was the Caroline Dawn Wortham '12 Leadership Speaker. Rader came to national prominence after the release of the short documentary "Heroin(e)" by Netflix in September 2017. Then in April of 2018, she was chosen as one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people in the world. She currently serves as director of the Mayor's Council of Public Health and Drug Control Policy in Huntington.

Rader shared Huntington's history of dealing with the evolving illegal drug trade throughout her career: The pill mill epidemic when a population of their people had become addicted to pain pills; the heroin problem and addicts reusing dirty needles; then the deadly trade of fentanyl and methamphetamines. "When I started with our fire department we would ride out on emergency calls, do our tasks, put out fires, then all of a sudden we're being called out for overdoses. We wondered what was going on. We didn't under-

stand the big picture that life was changing on our streets," she shared. It was at that point she knew she wanted to affect change in drug trafficking in Huntington.

When Mayor Steve Williams was first elected in 2013, he accompanied the police on many drug raids and witnessed overdoses firsthand. As a result, the city started a program called "River to Jail." "If a dealer came across the Ohio River into Huntington to sell drugs, they were going to go to jail. Within three months there were 226 arrests, but within two weeks you couldn't tell any arrests have been made. That's how many people were waiting in the wings for their opportunity to sell drugs," recalled Rader. It was at that point

they changed their strategy and started to work on the demand side of drug trafficking in addition to the supply side, and the mayor began an Office of Drug Control Policy.

Knowing that Rader was also a nurse, the mayor asked her to become a member of the new agency in addition to her fire chief duties. "It was me and two others. We traveled 45 minutes from Huntington to visit a Harm Reduction



Christian Duncan speaks to a table of Leadership Conference attendees in the Hall of Valor.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Program. We observed how people were responding to getting clean syringes, wraparound services, referrals to treatment, and help with life in general to make themselves better. Clearly the program was a success. We decided we had to do this for our people, and that was the beginning of the path we went down,” she reported.

The office began to keep real time data on tracking overdoses, as well as educating people in the community. “We met with small groups, no more than 10, and we started with the faith community who welcomed us with open arms. We discovered that faith leaders were struggling with helping members of their congregation, and they wanted help from us. We built a program called ‘Faith Community United’ to help educate faith leaders on how they could help their members,” Rader said. The comprehensive program saw positive results with the number of overdoses and deaths due to overdose gradually decreasing each year.

Another problem Rader encountered was compassion fatigue among the first responders. “A fire department goes through a lot of wear and tear on their equipment which costs a lot of money, but you can’t measure the cost associated with the wear and tear on your people. By looking at our basic data, we calculated that the average firefighter in Huntington in 2017 saw five deaths a month. So we started a wellness program called Compass that is for first responders and run by first responders. They decide what they want, and what they need. I consider it a huge success,” she stated.

Rader ended by telling her audience that communication is key. “You must have good communication skills, listen to your people, and validate what they are experiencing. You must be flexible, and not afraid to fail. Because I’ve learned a lot more from my failures than I ever did from my successes. Be compassionate, it changes the way you lead when you open your heart and see how everybody else lives.”

Two alumni speakers, Robert Foresman ’83 and Miguel Monteverde ’66 shared practical advice and personal anecdotes in smaller breakout sessions. Foresman has had a career in emergency management and preparedness, and Monteverde had a long career, both in the military and as a civilian, in media relations and crisis communications.

The second day opened with a moderated panel discussion with law enforcement professionals discussing crisis situations they responded to as leaders. Retired Fairfax County Police Chief Robert Beach shared the complexity of being the incident commander for the county on 9/11 when the plane hit the Pentagon. Milton Franklin Jr., police chief of Bridgewater College, discussed the 2022 shooting at the college that killed two officers on his force. VMI Police Chief

Mike Marshall spoke of the time he was incident commander while working for the University of Virginia police department, and a credible bomb threat was made during the 2005 Rolling Stones concert in Charlottesville. All panel members stressed the importance of preparation and constant training.

VMI adjunct professor Dr. Stephen Lowe presented an in-depth case study workshop on the Mann Gulch forest fire in 1949. The interactive session had attendees apply the knowledge gained from earlier speakers to analyze the preparedness, leadership, followership, and communication aspects of the tragedy, in which 12 U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers died. He was joined by former Augusta hotshot crew member and current Lexington resident, Christian Duncan.

The keynote speaker of the event was retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Kirk Lippold, commanding officer of the USS Cole when it came under terrorist attack by al-Qaeda in the port of Aden, Yemen, Oct. 12, 2000, and author of “Front Burner: Al Qaeda’s Attack on the USS Cole.”



Milton Franklin Jr., Mike Marshall, and Robert Beach answer questions during a panel discussion led by Col. Pat Looney in Gillis Theater Oct. 31.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Lippold relayed his story of what is considered to be one of the most brazen acts of terrorism by al-Qaeda prior to 9/11. The large audience was comprised mostly of students who were born well after the ominous event. Lippold’s rapid-fire recitation kept listeners hanging on to his every word, and his attention to detail allowed them to visualize themselves on the deck of the ship on that fateful day.

When Lippold originally took command of USS Cole, he had one year to get the

ship ready for deployment. He made sure his crew were all painstakingly well-trained for their specific jobs, so they could respond automatically under a crisis. “They weren’t happy about the intense training I put them through at the time, but two months later when we got hit, they had the competence to know if someone was missing from their station, and the confidence to step up into those now vacant positions. They were able to do what was necessary to save our ship and save our shipmates,” Lippold stated proudly.

USS Cole was first deployed to the coast of the former Republic of Yugoslavia to provide support for 14 days, then on to the Middle East. Because they had been held back for two weeks, in order to reach their destination in time, they had to race across the Mediterranean and down the Red Sea at double the normal speed and burned a lot of gas. They pulled into the port city of Aden, Yemen, for a routine fueling stop. Lippold relayed what happened

Continued on next page

as his ship was taking on fuel, “As I’m sitting at my desk at 11:18 in the morning, there was a thunderous explosion. You could feel all 505 feet and 8,400 tons of guided missile destroyer suddenly and violently thrust up and to the right. The ship seemed to hang for a split second before it slipped back down into the water, and rocked from side to side. Power failed, lights went out, ceiling tiles popped out, and a table that had coffee and water on it flipped over. I came up on the balls of my feet and grabbed the underside of my desk in the brace position as everything popped up and slammed back down.”

A small bomb-laden boat, had pulled alongside and detonated explosives ripping a 40-foot-wide hole in the ship, killing 17 and injuring 39 crew members.

Not knowing if the ship would be boarded or if there would be a follow-up attack, Lippold grabbed his personal weapon, loaded it, and left his cabin to survey the damage. “I took that deep breath and said, ‘Well this might be your destiny. If you see someone that doesn’t belong, duck first and don’t leave any round in the chamber,’” he recalled. Thankfully the terrorists died in the attack, and Lippold did not have to use his weapon.

He discovered that the uninjured members of his crew had taken it upon themselves to set up a triage center for the injured, provide damage control of the ship, and conduct security watches to make sure no other attacks would occur.

Lippold’s priority was to save the ship. He paused his narrative to advise the audience on making decisions during a crisis. “You start making decisions based on the best information you have at that moment. As time moves forward and you get better information, and you need to change the decision—change it! Even if it means you have to do a 180-degree change. That’s one of the things that has to constantly happen during a crisis. Don’t get locked-in and feel you’ve got to stick with the previous decision.”

Lippold contacted the Yemeni Port Authority by radio and asked them for three things to which they readily agreed: freeze all harbor rules, notify local hospitals, and maintain open communication with them. The Yemenis said they would send boats out to get the wounded off and take them to the hospitals, Lippold agreed but warned them, “You must not come any closer than 100 meters to my port side or I will shoot you.” The Yemenis said they understood and when the boats started coming out, Lippold observed a very unique phenomenon, “I don’t care where you are in the world, when you tell someone something like that, there is no problem with the English language. Most boats made a huge 300-meter arc around the stern of the ship. We had to get used to boats coming out to us that didn’t represent a threat. By the same token the Yemenis had to get used to a very angry, very agitated crew that had broken out every weapon that were locked, loaded, and safeties off: Machine guns, grenade

launchers, shotguns, pistols, wrenches, hammers, screwdrivers,” he quipped. Then very seriously said, “Whatever it was going to take to defend the ship, we were ready to do it.”

At the end of 17 days, the crew had saved their ship, their shipmates, and got the USS Cole underway out of the harbor, and toward the coast, where it would be loaded unto the heavy lift vessel, Blue Marlin. “As we got towed out by the tug, what did that really signify

for us? It was that ability to bounce back. It’s that resiliency to get through a major event like this not only to survive, but excel at it. I turned to my executive officer at that moment and told him to play the first song on the PA system, the ‘Star Spangled Banner.’ I wanted our national anthem echoing across the harbor to send a signal to the Yemeni people that despite what had happened to us, we were leaving with our heads held high. I turned to my executive officer again and said, ‘play the second song.’ It was the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ again, but this time it was Jimi Hendrix’s rendition.”

The USS Cole was repaired in Pascagoula, Mississippi, over a period of two years, and returned to the fleet. It remains an important warship among the surface forces in the Atlantic.

Next year’s Leadership Conference will be held Oct. 28–29, 2024, with an announcement of the theme and title coming in the spring. To stay informed, visit the conference website and join the mailing list at <https://conferences.vmi.edu/leadership>. 🌟



Robert Foresman '83 gives a presentation in Gillis Theater Oct. 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Class of 1998 Reunion Gift

Joey Bates '98, Christian Craft '98, and Kevin Trujillo '98 present the Class of 1998 25th Reunion gift of \$1,123,980.98 to the Institute during the football game against the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Oct. 28. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, and David Prasnicki, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer, accept the gift.—*Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.*



Class of 2025 Celebrates Ring Figure

By Marianne Hause

Even the dense smoke and poor air quality from the Matts Creek Fire in neighboring Bedford County, could not hinder the Class of 2025 from celebrating Ring Figure, one of the most anticipated events for cadets, Nov. 16 and 17, before leaving post for Thanksgiving furlough.

The first ring was designed by members of the Class of 1848 and was presented to graduates during finals celebrations. The design was simple—the word “Mizpah” was cut in the stone and on the

inside of the band was engraved, “1 of 24, July 1848.” Mizpah, from the Hebrew, is translated as “the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.” The term signified brotherhood, the enduring connection among the 24 graduates of the Class of 1848. Modern rings have become increasingly larger and more elaborate in design, but the tradition of the class designing their one-of-a-kind ring remains the same and the word “Mizpah” is often still found.

The custom of 2nd Class cadets receiving the class ring was established in 1907, and the addition of the Ring Figure dance started in 1927 with the Class of 1928.

On Thursday, Nov. 16, the traditional presentation of the combat rings in Memorial Hall and class supper in Crozet Hall were held. The Douglas Carter France III '71 Memorial Award for “excellent character, selflessness, graciousness, and enthusiasm” was presented by Warren J. “Buddy” Bryan '71 to Noah Ahrens '25, a biology major from Lynchburg, Virginia. Enthusiastically accepting the award



Linh Q. Ngo '25 holds up his ring box after receiving it during the Ring Figure presentation in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Lt. Gen. David Furness '87 speaks in Cameron Hall during the Ring Figure presentation Nov. 17.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Ahrens stated, “Everyone always compliments us on our smile,” referring to the cheerful smiles he and his brother Owen Ahrens '24, who won the award last year, customarily display on their faces. “I love my BRs and a big smile from you, or when you call my name from across barracks, that’s what excites me. All the little things you do is what makes this place so special. We are here for each other.”

During the supper, Institute and Corps Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers addressed the class, who welcomed him to the podium with a thunderous ovation. Sowers shared with the cadets that there is a unique loyalty that reaches through generations of VMI alumni, and when they put on their class ring for the first time, they become more than ever, part of that VMI “bloodline” of courage, pride, determination, selflessness, and dedication to duty. Sowers reminded the cadets of when Château-Thierry in France fell during WWI. “On June 1, the German troops moved into Belleau Wood. The U.S. 2nd division, which included a brigade of Marines, was brought up along the Paris-Metz highway. The retreating French, having suffered heavy casualties, urged the advancing Marines to turn back. Their response to the French came from Captain Lloyd W. Williams when he uttered the now famous retort, ‘Retreat? Hell, we just got here.’” Sowers added that when Capt. Williams had been wounded on the battlefield, he told the approaching medics, “Don’t bother with me. Take care



Noah Ahrens '25 walks to the stage to accept the the Douglas Carter France III '71 Memorial Award in Crozet Hall Nov. 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

of my men.” “That sounds like something many of you might say,” he told the cadets.

Sowers closed by quoting President Ronald Reagan, “‘Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction...it must be fought for, protected...or we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in America where men were free.’” He then charged the cadets with the responsibility of never allowing freedom to go extinct under their watch. “Celebrate the glory of your youth and know that you are amongst some of the greatest warriors this nation has to offer.”

Sowers deployed multiple times including Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a distinguished graduate of the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy and has been awarded many personal

decorations including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device and gold star in lieu of second award, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation with combat distinguishing device and two gold stars in lieu of third award, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement with three gold stars in lieu of fourth award, and the Combat Action Ribbon with two gold stars in lieu of third award. In 2018, Sowers retired from the Marine Corps and assumed his duties at VMI.

The class nominated Cpl. Jake Rogers, military sciences instructor, to be their honorary brother rat. Nathan Benton '25,



Maximus Ankrah '26 presents Brooks Freeman '25 with his combat ring in Memorial Hall Nov. 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Caroline Fiorillo '25 walks under the saber arch with her Ring Figure date in Memorial Garden.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.

Ring Figure Committee president, presented him with a signet dinner ring. “Rogers began working at VMI when we matriculated in 2021 and is well liked. He has a phenomenal attitude, and has had a profound influence on our class,” said Benton.

In his acceptance speech, Rogers demonstrated an object lesson his father had taught him. He called for a volunteer to squeeze a hand grip strengthener while maintaining a quarter between the grips. After a few minutes of squeezing, the quarter dropped, and Rogers revealed, “The secret of keeping the quarter from dropping is to grip tighter, and give it everything you’ve got. You either get better or worse, you never remain the same. Now until the day you die, you are in a constant quest to develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. After great achievements, people tend to rest on their laurels. Don’t let your talents atrophy and slip away, like that quarter.” He closed by telling the class, “I look forward with anticipation to hear of your great accomplishments and glorious deeds in the years to come.”

Rogers joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2007. He was mobilized for deployment for security and joint training in Israel and again to embassy security in Yemen. He received his associate degree from Georgia Military College, and his bachelors and master’s degrees in history with a focus on military history from Florida State University. Rogers has been awarded the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the Mobilization Ribbon, a Meritorious Mast, and two Certificates of Commendations awards.

On Friday, Nov. 17, a family brunch in Crozet Hall was followed by the formal ring presentation ceremony where 2nd Class cadets received their individualized rings in Cameron Hall. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, opened the ceremony by reminding the class that they were the first rat class for him as superintendent, and he holds them in high regard. He continued by telling them that

See Ring Figure, page 16

Engineering Cadet Receives Three-Legged Stool

By Marianne Hause

Kate Taylor '24, who is majoring in civil engineering and minoring in Chinese language, has been presented with the Three-Legged Stool, an award given annually since 2001 by the Keydet Club to the top cadet-athlete who excels academically, militarily, and athletically.

Academically, Taylor has maintained a Dean's list cumulative GPA her entire cadetship. Two years ago, she won the John Bowie Gray 1867 Award for first standing 3rd Class cadet in civil engineering. Last summer, she conducted research titled "A Study of Stagnation: Understanding How Water Stagnation Affects Drinking Water and Artificial Intelligence Systems Can Improve Water Quality" through the Summer Undergraduate Research Institute program, and presented her findings at the WaterJAM 2023 conference in September. Maj. Rebekah Martin, assistant professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, admires Taylor's strong character. "Her work reflects her convictions, beliefs, and passion for people and engineering. She is a leader in the classroom, encouraging her classmates to complete their best work and keep an optimistic outlook on life at the Institute," said Martin.

Engineering professor and diving coach, Col. Thomas Timmes '92, agrees with Martin's assessment of Taylor. "Kate has learned how to achieve and sustain a critical balance with her academics, NCAA swimming, and Corps executive officer leadership role. She looks for opportunities to expand her knowledge beyond the classroom and invests in herself by taking challenging electives," he said.

Militarily, Taylor has held many regimental leadership roles. As a 3rd Class cadet, she was a supply corporal, the following year she was a supply master sergeant, and this



Jim Miller, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, and Danny Thornton '78 present Kate Taylor '24 with the Three-Legged Stool award in Marshall Hall. —Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.

year she is VMI's first-ever cadet chief of staff (COS), serving as third in command of the Corps of Cadets. As COS, Taylor is the regimental commander's (RCO) principal assistant for directing, coordinating, supervising, and training the staff, freeing the RCO from routine details. She also passes pertinent information and insight from the staff to the RCO and from the RCO to staff. The COS must understand the RCO's intent, personality, and style. "It is an honor to have been selected to fill this role. My initial excitement has shifted to having a profound sense of gratitude and duty. I was drawn



Kate Taylor '24 has competed with the VMI NCAA swimming team each year of her cadetship and holds multiple team records. —Photo courtesy of VMI Athletics.

to VMI because of the disciplined structure it offers. What has been most rewarding and fascinating to me has been navigating a substantial new role that has no instruction manual," said Taylor.

Athletically, Taylor was recruited from high school for the VMI women's swim team, and has competed for the team all four years of her cadetship. According to Scott Thacker, head coach of the women's swimming team, she

is a key contributor to the team. "Kate is a multiple time team record holder. She swam key legs on the 400 freestyle and 200 medley relay team record setting performances at the 2023 America East championships, and ranks 4th all time in program history in the 50 and 100 freestyle. Her love and gratitude of VMI pours out into all she does here on post. Whether you find her leading our team's Fellowship of Christian Athletes huddle, or in the midst of her duties as chief of staff, or her efforts in the pool, Kate thoroughly sets a standard of excellence that we all can be proud of, and be inspired

by," he said. Taylor won the Female Performance of the Year award, as well as the WORKHORSE award for exceptional attitude and work ethic the 2021–22 swimming and diving season.

In addition, Taylor is a member of the Cadet Superintendent Advisory Board, an esteemed group working with the superintendent to creatively seek to resolve issues to improve everyday life at the Institute. She was elected by her peers to serve on

Continued on next page



Kate Taylor '24

the Student Athletic Advisory Committee as a liaison between athletic staff and cadet counseling to develop a plan to improve and support wellness of cadet-athletes. She served as facilitator at VMI's 2023 Leadership and Ethics conference, and is a member of the mess hall committee. Last year, she served as chair for the Ring Figure ball. She is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and president of the Society of Women Engineers.

Taylor considers winning the Three-Legged Stool a blessing. "I had to keep pinching myself. It didn't feel entirely real. It was a great day of celebration. I truly thank my parents for being my support system, their depth of love for me and the support I've always felt is something that's unmatched. My coach as well is someone who has been there for me in a support role, especially as I end my VMI swimming career," she said.

Taylor is from Newton, Massachusetts, and graduated from Newton South High School where she was a member of the record-holding 200- and 400-yard freestyle relay swim teams, served as team captain, earned the Award of Excellence, the Coach's Award, Rookie of the Year, and the 110% Award. She is the daughter of Bob and Anne Taylor. ❄️

Lexington Christmas Parade

Regimental Executive Officer Paul Murray '24 leads the Rat Mass and Regimental Band down Lexington's Main Street to spread holiday cheer in the annual Lexington Christmas Parade the evening of Dec. 1. The next day, the Regimental Band participated in the Dominion Energy Christmas Parade in Richmond, Virginia.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Famous Visitors *continued from page 2*

Award. Representatives from Canterbury Cathedral and Washington National Cathedral were also present.

Former Secretary of State and 1973 Nobel Prize winner Henry Kissinger spoke as part of the H.B. Johnson Jr. Class of 1926, Distinguished Lecture Series.

Gen. Wesley K. Clark, former supreme allied commander Europe of NATO and one of the nation's most highly decorated military officers, spoke on post.

2002—President George W. Bush spoke at the 25th annual George C. Marshall ROTC Awards Seminar.

2006—Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld delivered the spring commencement address.

Andrew Young, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and top aide to Martin Luther King Jr. during the American Civil Rights movement, received the second Jonathan Myrick Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award.

2007—Sen. John McCain chose VMI as the venue for his first of three major policy addresses leading to his official declaration of candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination. Multiple members of the Washington press corps also attended.

2008—Vice President Richard "Dick" Cheney visited post on Military Appreciation Day.

2010—Spilman Pumphrey '11 interviewed the last living WWI veteran, 109 year old, Frank Buckles.

2012—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton received the Institute's Distinguished Diplomat Award.

2013—Scenes of the feature film, "Field of Lost Shoes" were filmed on post with cadets and recent graduates acting as extras. The film follows a group of cadets through life in barracks



Gen. Colin Powell speaks in Cameron Hall in 1993.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

during the Civil War and depicts their actions leading up to the Battle of New Market.

2014—Mythbuster, Grant Imahara, television personality and robotics guru, spoke during the STEM education conference.

2015—U.S. Rep. John Lewis accepted the Jonathan M. Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award.

Kirsten Powers, political analyst, author, longtime Fox news analyst and former Clinton administration staffer, was guest speaker for the academic convocation.

2016—James A. Baker III, former White House Chief of Staff, received the 2016 Harry F. Byrd Jr. '35 Public Service Award in a ceremony in Cameron Hall, followed by a parade in his honor. Baker served under three U.S. presidents.

2017—U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg spoke in Cameron Hall on the court decision she authored 21 years earlier that allowed women to attend VMI.

Crew members of the television show "Salvage Dawgs" returned the barracks door from the room occupied by George C. Marshall during his time as a cadet to the VMI Museum. Black Dog Salvage, an architectural salvage store based in Roanoke, received a donation of old barracks doors that had been stored in a barn for decades. Marshall's door was identified by the room number.

Judge Andrew Napolitano, regular commentator on Fox News was keynote speaker for the Leadership and Ethics Conference, "Speaking Truth to Power: Candid and Courageous Civil Discourse." Television journalist, Sharyl Attkisson also spoke at the conference.

Continued on next page



Lt. Gen. Josiah Bunting III '63 shakes hands with President George W. Bush in 2002.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.



U.S. Rep. John Lewis speaks in Cameron Hall after receiving the Jonathan M. Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award in 2015.—VMI File Photo by Kevin Remington.

2018—Former U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson spoke at the spring commencement.

U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis addressed the Corps in Cameron Hall, detailing challenges they'd soon face in the military and in society, which both need leadership, allies, and modernization.

2019—Maj. Jeffrey Struecker, the Army ranger who led his three-Humvee convoy through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, to evacuate Pfc. Todd Blackburn from the firefight that inspired the movie and book, "Black Hawk Down," spoke in Marshall Hall.



Luke Phillips '17 presents Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with a gift in Cameron Hall in 2017.—VMI File Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Decorated Afghanistan War veteran and Pittsburgh Steelers offensive tackle Alejandro Villanueva, visited post as part of the Center for Leadership and Ethics' Courageous Leadership series.

Carolyn Miles, CEO of Save the Children, was the first woman to receive the Jonathan Myrick Daniels '61 Humanitarian Award.

2020—Vice President Michael Pence addressed the Corps of Cadets in Cameron Hall. Due to COVID-19, seating was limited and socially distanced.

Trivia Questions

1. When the Honorable John W. Warner, former Secretary of the Navy, visited VMI in 1976, who was his then-fiancée who accompanied him?
2. Which Republican presidential nominee spoke in Marshall Hall in 2012?
3. James A. Baker III, who received the 2016 Harry F. Byrd Jr. '35 Public Service Award in 2016 served under which three U.S. presidents?
4. Which former Supreme Court Justice received the Harry F. Byrd Jr. '35 Public Service Award in 2008?
5. VMI has experienced fame as the site locale of commercials for two major companies. What soft drink company filmed a commercial in Memorial Hall in 2000? What personal grooming company featured cadets as the principal actors in their commercial in 1998?

Men's Rugby Wins Cardinal Conference Championship

The men's club rugby team traveled to Culpeper, Virginia, in early November to compete in the Division III Men's Rugby Cardinal Conference Championship after a regular season with five wins and a single loss to UVA, which is a Division II school.

First VMI successfully took on the University of Richmond Spiders with a final score of 38-14. Team captain Nate Mayfield '24 earned his first ever hat trick (3 tries). VMI's team later won against Hampden-Sydney College, allowing them to move to the finals to compete against their main rivals in this conference, Christendom College. The final score was 39-21, with the Cardinal Conference Championship brought back to Lexington.

The team moved on to the regional semi-final competition later in November.—

Photos courtesy of VMI Rugby.



Ring Figure is a tremendous achievement. “You’ve made a giant step forward, one step closer to the successful completion of your undergraduate academic journey. Wear your ring with honor and wear it with a sense of duty as you continue to forge your legacy in VMI’s history books,” he said.

Alumnus guest speaker, Lt. Gen. David J. Furness ’87, addressed the cadets after Wins, and shared his thoughts on the symbolism, service, and sacrifice that the VMI class ring represents. “In our postmodern society of moral relativism and shifting ethical goalposts, such symbolism is important. It helps anchor us to our core values and ideals. Symbols on the rings capture the revered principles, historical events, and artifacts that VMI has built, developed, and refined over the many decades of its existence, honor above self, and commitment to selfless service.” Furness described how the experiences shared by each VMI class become the iconography the class holds most dear: key dates, like Matriculation, Breakout, Ring Figure and graduation; images like, “Virginia Mourning Her Dead,” barracks, and Gen. George C. Marshall, who he encouraged the cadets to study and emulate as the greatest example of selfless service. “The symbols help bind you to each other and trigger memories of your cadetship, which become more powerful and meaningful as the years pass.” He added that earning the right to wear a class ring is a watershed moment in the development of the class’ identity and maturity. “It indicates that you are collectively well underway to crossing the threshold of achievement whereby the responsibility of leading the Corps falls squarely on your shoulders.”

Furness spoke to the cadets about the reality of military service to the nation, and of the American servicemen and women who gave up all their tomorrows for others to enjoy the fruits of liberty and freedom today. “While you may not pay the ultimate sacrifice, I’m quite certain that all of you will eventually be met with challenges that exceed everything you’ve ever imagined. You might doubt yourself and your abilities, but it will be the moment to deliver on this Institute’s promise to produce men and women of high character and action.”

He concluded by sharing, “For me personally, America is still the last best hope for all mankind. That shining city on a hill that remains a beacon of hope. Our Constitution and Bill of Rights have inspired millions around the globe. Service is what defines me and brings me joy. Your journey of service and sacrifice is just now beginning with the acceptance of this ring. By choosing the VMI

experience, you chose the road less traveled, but a road full of purpose, inward satisfaction, and camaraderie. Congratulations on attaining this milestone in your cadetship, and I wish you all the best through the rest of your cadetship and in all your future endeavors.”

Throughout Furness’ career he has served in a variety of command and staff billets in both the operating forces and the supporting establishment. As a general officer he commanded Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, and the 2nd Marine Division. In the supporting establishment, he served on the staff of The Basic School as staff platoon commander and as tactics instructor for both the basic officer and infantry officer course; commanding officer of Recruiting Station Sacramento, California; director, Marine Corps Legislative Liaison Office in the U.S. House of Representatives; director of Expeditionary Warfare School; legislative assistant to the commandant of the Marine Corps; and assistant deputy commandant for Plans, Policy and Operations, Headquarters.

His professional military education includes The Basic School, the Infantry Officer Course, the Army Infantry Officer Advanced Course, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, the School of Advanced Warfighting, and the National War College. He earned master’s degrees from both the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and the National War College. He participated in contingency operations in the Republic of Panama, Operation Provide Comfort, Operation Unified



Callum Boyd '25 poses for a photo next to the cannonball Nov. 17.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Assistance, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom. His personal decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (3), Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device (2), Combat Action Ribbon (3), Meritorious Service Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. He retired from the deputy commandant for Plans, Policy and Operations Headquarters.

Wins presented cadets with their rings, and cadets and their families had the opportunity to visit Memorial Hall for a ring blessing, led by Benton, Sedona Dancu '25, Caroline Lassalle '25, Mohammad Khan '25, and Max Kleeberg '25, who all shared their spiritual faith. Col. John Casper '04, Institute chaplain, then shared his thoughts with the class that “the prize is worth the price,” a slogan he had read on VMI admissions literature when he was a high school

Continued on next page

student considering VMI. It encouraged him to matriculate and to get through the Rat Line. "That slogan helped me get through a lot at VMI. I remember finally getting my ring 20 years ago almost to the day, right here in this building. My date had backed out just less than a week earlier, I was overwhelmed with academics, and I had a boxing match that very morning. Then, I looked down at my ring. Inside was inscribed, 'the prize is worth the price,'" he reflected. He encouraged the class that the idea that the prize of the end goal is worth the price you need to pay to get there, whether it is the purchase price of a ring, or enduring struggles at VMI, or challenges in knowing God. Life is full of hardships, but with hardships comes blessings. He concluded by saying, "Your ring is temporary. Your soul is eternal. Fight the good fight of

faith, run the race of life with endurance. Grow your faith. Get to know God better. The prize, like your ring, is worth the price."



Ian Geesaman '25 has his date put his ring on his finger during the Ring Figure ball in Cocke Hall Nov. 17.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.

He concluded the service by allowing each representative faith group in attendance a corner in Memorial Hall to privately pray over and bless their cadets.

The evening wrapped up with the Ring Figure ball held in Cocke Hall with the traditional dress code of coatees, white ducks/long white skirts for cadets, floor-length white gowns and elbow-length gloves for female civilian dates, and tuxedos with white bow tie for male civilian dates. Couples were able to process through a saber arch and have their photograph taken in the large replica ring. 🌟

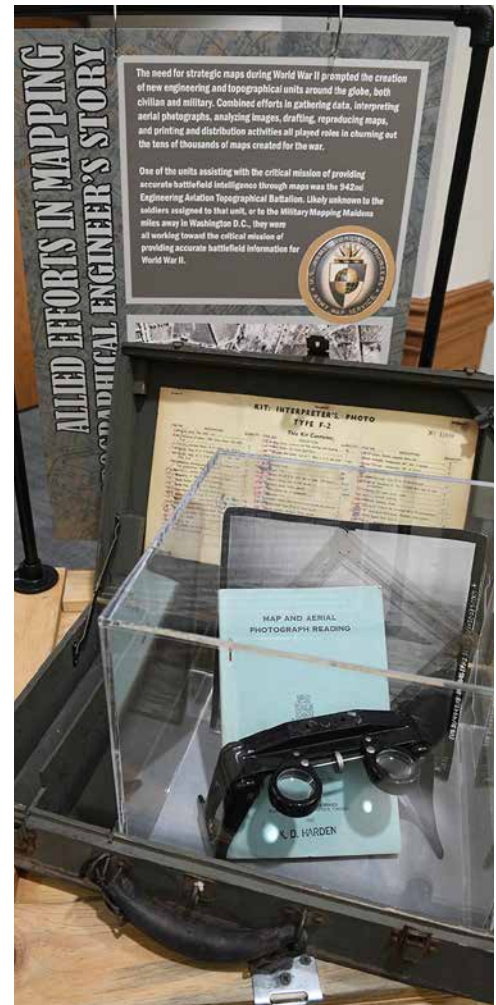
Library Hosts Traveling Exhibit— "Military Mapping Maidens"

Preston Library is hosting a traveling exhibit through April 30, 2024, called, "Military Mapping Maidens." The exhibit features the story of 224 young women who were recruited by the Army Map Service (AMS) in 1943 to research and draw maps by hand for the Allied war effort during World War II. The exhibit is narrated through the personal experiences of Bea Shaheen McPherson, a Kent State University alumna, who was encouraged to take a 60-credit hour course in cartography. Completion of the course, designed by pioneering female cartographer Edith Putnam Parker and taught at Kent State by professor Edna Eisen, opened the door for McPherson to apply for civil service employment with the AMS.

Young women recruited to fill mapmaking roles for the AMS came from 22 colleges and universities where Parker's cartography class was offered. Dubbed the Military Mapping Maidens, or 3M Girls, the mapmakers were housed first in temporary barracks-style housing in Arlington, Virginia, until civil service housing at McLean Gardens was completed. On workdays they commuted by trolley to the Ruth Building, a three-story brick structure covered in camouflage to conceal its top-secret purpose. There, 3M Girls toiled up to 70 hours per week in mapping departments that included project drafting, foreign editing, and research.

Over the course of the war, the 3M Girls assisted in creating more than 40,000 maps of all types, and made a profound impact on the map making industry and preserved the lives of soldiers and citizens across the globe through their dedication to accurate, hand-drawn mapping.

The exhibit is free and open to the public during library operating hours.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Founders Day *continued from page 5*

the curriculum, teaching, and corresponding with parents and community.” Hall shared that even then, Smith stressed the concept of a citizen-soldier. “The first class to graduate clearly met the standards of being citizen-soldiers, a standard that has been maintained ever since, as VMI graduates have contributed to a nation’s security home and abroad,” he said.

In closing Hall stated, “Thank you for this high honor of a lifetime. I say most sincerely that I’m forever grateful to have been a VMI cadet, as my entire life has been built on what was learned here. My very best wishes go to each and every member of this Corps of Cadets. I’m most proud of all of you, proud of you for having selected the most challenging path through higher education in the United States. I wish you good health, and long life serving your country, community, and families. May the good Lord bless the Virginia Military Institute and each and every one of you.”

The day concluded with a parade in which Hall took review with Wins, and the Cadet Battery fired 13 rounds from the howitzers. ❄



Trick or Treat in Barracks

Cadets welcomed families of faculty and staff to barracks Halloween evening. Cadets, many in costume, handed out candy to the trick-or-treaters. —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Thanksgiving Supper

The Corps of Cadets had their annual Thanksgiving supper in Crozet Hall Nov. 14. Parkhurst Dining provided traditional Thanksgiving dishes. Administration and members of faculty were invited by the Corps to attend. —VMI Photos by Andrew Partridge '24.



Cadets Learn Etiquette

By Marianne Hause

Cadets learned dining and conversation etiquette at an evening event Oct. 26 in Moody Hall. The affair included a four-course dinner, and gave cadets an opportunity to network with alumni and prominent members of the community. The event was sponsored by the Building BRIDGES Club and the Cadet Investment Group, in collaboration with the Office of Career Services and the Alumni Association.

Katie Maher, assistant director of the Office of Career Services, opened the event with a short discussion on developing one's elevator pitch, a 30–90 second way of introducing oneself. Maher pointed out that an elevator pitch is the appropriate way to start a dinner conversation with an unfamiliar person, and should include one's name, current status, recent past



Linda Moreschi demonstrates dining etiquette skills in Moody Hall Oct. 26.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

experiences, and plans for the future. Cadets were then given time to practice their elevator pitch at the table with their fellow participants.

Linda Moreschi, wife of Brig. Gen. Robert Moreschi, dean of the faculty and deputy superintendent for academics, led the cadets in dining etiquette throughout the meal. “We wanted to help cadets approach their upcoming professional lives—whether it be military or civilian—with confidence. They really seemed to enjoy learning some of the intricacies of

dining etiquette, and of course enjoyed the delicious meal prepared, served, and donated by Parkhurst Dining,” she said.

Moreschi taught the cadets different table place settings they may be exposed to, which utensils to use for the various meal courses, and how to use them. She discussed table manners, and how to properly fold a napkin.

Kyle Bordeaux '22, a computer information systems major from Fredericksburg, Virginia, learned a lot about the different aspects of business etiquette during formal events. “I discovered how hard it is to eat a wedge salad while keeping your elbows off the table,” he admitted with a laugh.

Carter Wasser '25, a civil engineering major from King George, Virginia, had little education in proper techniques of formal dining prior to the event. “It served as a great trial for future dining events, and was a great opportunity to network with alumni,” she said.

Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl, professor in the Department of Economics and Business and faculty co-advisor for the Building BRIDGES Club, shared, “The energy in the room was great! We appreciated the participation of the alumni who chose to spend more than two hours of their evening with the cadets. I am hoping that this was the first of a series of workshops on soft skills.” ❄



Cadets enjoy their dinner while learning proper etiquette in Moody Hall Oct. 26.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

Trivia Answers from Page 15

1. Elizabeth Taylor
2. Mitt Romney
3. Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush.
4. Sandra Day O'Connor
5. Coca-Cola, Norelco



Past issues of the Institute Report can be found in the digital VMI Archives.



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Rat Olympics

Rat Olympics kicked off Founders Day activities in the Corps Physical Training Facility. This is a competition between the rats of each company, and the culmination of Rat Challenge, a vigorous 10-week program that provides leadership opportunities for upper-class cadets, while at the same time stretching rats physically and mentally, and enabling each of them to overcome any self-imposed limits with which they may be confronted. It included track and field matches, a high ropes course, a 34-foot high rock climbing wall, and tug of war competitions. Rat Olympics focuses on health and fitness, teamwork, strategy, overcoming mental obstacles, and maintaining a positive and helpful attitude.

Golf company, recognized for working the hardest and displaying the best attitude, won the Stockwell Cup, named for the late Col. Bill Stockwell.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Lexie West.

