



# INSTITUTE REPORT

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

Volume 50, Number 8, June 2022

## Commencement Held for Class of 2022

By Marianne Hause

Pride, honor, and tradition filled Cameron Hall as VMI held its commencement ceremony and conferred degrees on the Class of 2022 on Monday, May 16.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, noted that when the Class of 2022 matriculated on August 18, 2018, with 519 members, it was the largest matriculating class to date. From that



Members of the Class of 2022 toss their gloves in the air after being dismissed from duty and finishing their tenure at VMI.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

original group, 318 graduated, and 56% of them commissioned into the armed services on May 15.

Wins used his time at the podium to reflect on the unusual circumstances faced by the Class of 2022, one of the few classes to endure the full effects of a global pandemic. Their cadetship was punctuated with challenges, as there were restrictions

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## Board of Visitors honors Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III '62

By Col. Bill Wyatt

VMI's Board of Visitors has bestowed upon its former superintendent, Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62, the title superintendent emeritus and will name the upcoming leadership development building for Peay, VMI's 14<sup>th</sup> superintendent. VMI's current superintendent, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, announced the recognition at the Class of 1962 reunion dinner Tuesday, April 26.

As announced by Tom Watjen '76, VMI Board of Visitors president, on Jan. 29, VMI and the VMI Alumni Agencies formed a committee to finalize plans to honor and recognize the long tenure of Peay as VMI's superintendent. The committee was chaired

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# Adams Center's New Space Celebrated

By Michelle Ellwood

The John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis is now in its own dedicated space in Scott Shipp Hall, which was celebrated with a reception on April 22. Established in 2002, the center's resources were originally stored in a faculty office belonging to Col. Brad Coleman '95, director of the Adams Center. Coleman worked closely with Adams on his vision for the center, and he described Adams as "deeply committed" to the program. Since its founding, it has been a hub for collecting the stories of veterans of the Cold War and finding links between Cold War history and today's national security concerns.

A strategic plan, developed in 2012, focused on the use of the center's resources for current and future national security professionals, identifying partnerships that would amplify the work of the center. Those partnerships have grown into high-profile conferences, cadet scholarship opportunities, cadet internships, and distinguished scholars visiting post.

Of course, another part of this plan was the hope for more space and higher visibility, which became a reality in 2021. The new space is 3,600-square-feet on the 300 level of the renovated and expanded Scott Shipp Hall. It includes offices for the director and the deputy director, Maj. Jonathan Jones. The cadet assistants, who previously had nowhere to work, also now have office space. Included in the plans were a research library and comfortable seating. There is also



Lt. Col. John Casper '04 leads the service in Memorial Garden for Gail and John A. Adams '71.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

space for cadet collaboration and presentations.

"This is a fulfillment of John's vision," said Brig. Gen. Robert "Bob" Moreschi, dean of the faculty and deputy superintendent for academics. Moreschi is also chair of the Adams Center board of directors, which provides strategic guidance and oversees the activities of the center. "This is a place where cadets, faculty, and scholars from other institutions can come together to collaborate and do research."

Adams, who would have graduated with the Class

of 1971, transferred to Johns Hopkins University after one year at VMI. He went on to a successful business career while he maintained a strong interest in VMI and in military history. He funded activities of the center with cash donations and total gifts that came to more than \$5 million to fund his vision. Adams died in the summer of 2018. A memorial service for Adams and his wife, Gail, was held earlier in the day in Memorial Garden prior to the center's reception. At the service, Adams was described multiple times as kind and generous, and he was always up for a good debate. Family members, faculty, staff, and four brother rats from the Class of 1971 were in attendance.

"A lot of people have done a lot of work, but none of this would have happened without John," said Coleman. ❀



Brig. Gen. Bob Moreschi welcomes friends and family of Gail and John A. Adams '71 to the center named for Adams in Scott Shipp Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Col. Brad Coleman '95 remarks on his time with John A. Adams '71 during a ceremony in Memorial Garden April 22.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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**Header photo on page 1 by**  
Kelly Nye

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COVID-19 information and current VMI protocols can be found at [www.vmi.edu/COVID](http://www.vmi.edu/COVID).



## Memorial Parade

Morning clouds parted and the sun shone for the Memorial Parade, held Saturday, May 14. Prior to the parade, cadets read the names of the 591 cadets and alumni who died on the field of honor, or from their wounds, defending our country, beginning with the Mexican-American War through the global war on terror. The four cadets reading the names included valedictorian Christopher Hulburt '22, Angelina Garcia '25, Alexis Motko '22, and Thomas Reagan '25. Wreathes were laid in memory of the dead, one at the statue of Virginia Mourning Her Dead, and one at each of the barracks' arches. Col. Robert "Bob" Phillips '87 offered a prayer, followed by a three-volley salute and renditions of "Taps" and "Amazing Grace" before the Corps marched down Letcher Avenue.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.



# VMI Theatre Finally Celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

By Marianne Hause

VMI Theatre celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> plus 2 anniversary with a reunion of past performers, both cadets and community members, at a reception on Saturday, April 30 in Marshall Hall, prior to the performance of “Tom Jones” by Henry Fielding, adapted by David Rogers. The coronavirus pandemic sidelined the VMI Theatre 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in 2020, but the milestone celebration was finally able to happen.

Joellen Bland, director of “Tom Jones” and many other plays throughout her long tenure, enjoyed catching up with 30 theatre alumni cadets, from classes ’72-’20. “They have enriched my life in so many ways over the years. Theatre cadets are very special,” said Bland.

Prior to the construction of Gillis Theater in Marshall Hall, productions were held elsewhere on post including Scott Shipp Hall, Cameron Hall, Lejeune Hall, Nichols Engineering Building, and Moody Hall. Joe Pateralski ’82 recalled having to push a wheelchair back and forth between the post hospital and Scott Shipp Hall to be used in the production of “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” “I called myself ‘Joe the stage manager,’” laughed Pateralski. “Many times, when we were in Scott Shipp, our

performances would be disrupted by sirens from police cars and firetrucks on Main Street,” he recalled.

Brad Norwood ’83 shared his memories of “Shenandoah.” “We loaded trucks and vans and hauled our set, props, costumes, and actors down the hill to Cameron Hall where we invaded athletic locker rooms. One truck carrying the tall stage flats forgot about the overhead bridge on Main Street, and the flats were literally flattened when they encountered that bridge,” stated Norwood.



The cast of “Tom Jones” poses together after the April 30 performance in Gillis Theater.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Sean Fisher ’93 fondly recalls the dinner theatre production of “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.” “We rehearsed in the lower level of Lejeune Hall, which was a former bowling alley,” Fisher laughed, “But the performance was held upstairs. It was so wonderful that that room was filled to capacity for that show. It was great!”

Along with the theatre cadets, 35 community performers attended the reunion including Jan Lowry, who became involved in VMI Theatre productions when she moved to Rockbridge County 12 years ago. “My husband and I auditioned to meet people, and we have been rewarded many times over! We enjoy working with the cadets. I am always in awe with how they can balance their studies, cadet life, and extracurricular activities. They keep me young,” Lowry declared.

Shay Peters, a community actor who began performing with the group in 1989 stated, “It is always very special to work with the cadets and community theatre folks. I am always amazed how Joellen pulls it all together working around the cadets’ schedules. She deserves a medal!”

According to Bland, some of the theatre alumni had been in only one or two plays, while others performed in shows every year of their cadetships. “Doing theatre at VMI creates a special bond that only those who know the thrill of performing on a stage, or running lights and sound for a play, or simply standing in the wings waiting for their entrance cues can truly understand. There is nothing else quite like it!” said Bland. ✨



Joellen Bland, VMI Theatre director since 1982, accepts a gift from the cast of “Tom Jones” on April 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

# Moore Retires After Five Decades

By Marianne Hause

“The only way to do great work is to love what you.” When Steve Jobs made that oft repeated quote, he could have been referring to Vergie Moore, who has loved her job for nearly 56 years. Moore recently retired from VMI, the only place she has ever worked.

After graduating from Amherst County High School in 1965, she quickly attained her secretarial certificate from a local business college and was hired at VMI on September 16 of that year. “When I was hired, there were only 700 cadets. I was told, ‘There’s one reason you got this job, and that one reason is those 700 cadets.’ That stuck with me throughout the years, and that has motivated me to encourage the cadets to meet their goals,” Moore stated tenderly.

Moore’s first position on post was secretary in the biology department. “I worked for Doc Carroll,” stated Moore, referring to Col.

Robert P. “Doc” Carroll, for which Carroll Hall was named. “I was 18 years old and had always lived in rural areas. When Doc Carroll introduced me to people, he’d tease, ‘She’s a green country kid that I pulled out of the mountains and put shoes on her feet.’ He was so kind and taught me so much. I loved working in the biology department,” reminisced Moore.

She continued in the biology department for 23 years. “During those 23 years, I started out as a sister figure for the cadets, then became a mother figure, now I’m their grandmother,” Moore laughed. She has watched the cadets who came through the biology program become great achievers. “There are so many who have gone on to do great things. I really am proud of each one of them.” Moore went on to describe how VMI employees and staff at that time were like family. “Everyone knew each other in those days. We would have picnics with our families on the Parade Ground on weekends.”

In 1987, looking for a new challenge, Moore accepted a position with Col. Leroy D. Hammond, executive assistant to the superintendent. “I adored working in that office,” said Moore.

Three years later she transferred to the dean’s office where she worked for 15 years, under three different deans: Brig. Gen. Lee D. Badgett ’61, Brig. Gen. Alan Farrell, and Brig. Gen. Charles F. Brower IV. “I enjoyed interacting with the academic board and the Board of Visitors, and of course the cadets,” said Moore.

Moore first retired in 2005 to care for her ailing mother, who sadly passed away the following year. “I was getting bored staying at home. My kids accused me of vacuuming the grass, so when I got a call offering me a part-time job in the commandant’s office, I gladly accepted. I’ve come full circle you might say. I started working directly with the cadets in the biology department, and now with the commandant’s office in barracks, I interact with cadets all day every day.”

According to Col. Adrian T. Bogart III ’81, commandant, Moore has been a gift to the Institute for decades. “She was here when I was at the Institute, there when I left and here when I returned. When I came into the commandant’s assignment and Ms. Moore was here, I knew I was home. But I am like the thousand others she has helped and supported. It was our honor to stand in her ranks,” said Bogart.

Since 1978, Moore and her husband Danny have served as host parents for cadets. “My family grew up with that experience and we have loved treating the cadets like family, and siblings to our children. Most of the cadets we have

hosted have been from out of state, so on long weekends when they had nowhere else to go, we were happy to have them stay with us. We still correspond with many of those alumni and their families,” stated Moore.

She has seen many changes during her tenure on post. The size of the Corps of Cadets more than doubled, new buildings have been erected, and new courses added to the curriculum. “The one thing that hasn’t changed is the parking problem,” Moore joked. When asked if she would take the same career path if she had to do it over again, Moore reflected, “VMI has been home. It is such a special place and I’m proud of my work here.”

Moore plans to spend her retirement gardening, implementing “dirt therapy” as she calls it, and traveling with her husband, Danny, around the country. “We love to go to national parks, and I adore the ocean,” Moore exclaimed, “and of course we will visit family.” She and Danny have two children, four grandchildren, and five great grandchildren. ❀



Col. Adrian T. Bogart III '81, commandant, escorts Vergie Moore as cadets form a cordon to honor her after five decades of service at VMI. –VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

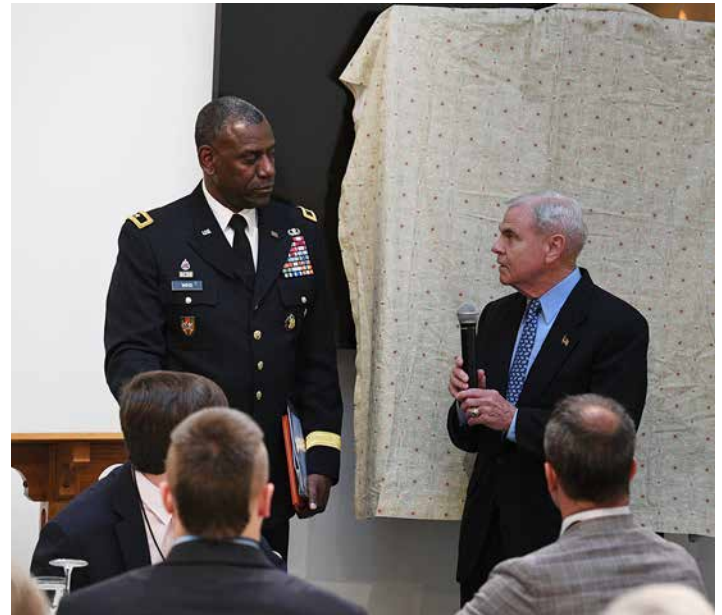


Brig. Gen. Dallas Clark '99 reads the orders for the recognition of Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62 on April 26 in the Patton Room in Lexington.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

by Bill Boland '73, former VMI Board of Visitors president, and consisted of representatives from the Institute, Alumni Agencies, and the Board of Visitors, past and present.

VMI is in the planning and design phase of a new building to be located adjacent to Marshall Hall which currently houses the Center for Leadership and Ethics, a key initiative of the strategic plan developed by Peay. The building will be known as Peay Hall and will house additional space for VMI's leadership programs as well as the VMI museum. The dining room within the new building will be named for Pamela Peay, Gen. Peay's wife and a tireless advocate for VMI. As plans for the new building are finalized, the recognition committee recommended a significant commemoration to Gen. Peay's service be incorporated into the overall design of the building.

The Institute celebrated many successes during Peay's 17 years as superintendent, including improved academic and co-curricular programs, major renovations of many buildings, and the construction of Third Barracks, Marshall Hall, and the Corps Physical



Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III '62 thanks Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 at the Class of 1962 reunion dinner in Lexington.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Training Facility. During his tenure, the former superintendent was dedicated to an environment of excellence where cadets were provided countless opportunities to develop traits of successful leadership—honor, respect, civility, self-discipline, and professionalism.

Peay, a civil engineering major and a quarterback of the Keydet football team while a cadet, served in the U.S. Army for 35 years after commissioning from VMI and retired at the rank of four-star general, a rank that's been achieved by only seven individuals commissioning out of an ROTC program at a senior military college. He was the Institute's third-longest serving superintendent after Maj. Gen. Francis H. Smith and Brig. Gen. Scott Shipp, VMI Class of 1859.

Gen. and Mrs. Peay will be the guests of honor at VMI's Founders Day celebration on Nov. 11, 2022. The Peay family will take review of the Founders Day parade and Gen. Peay's official portrait will be unveiled as it is placed among other superintendents' portraits in the Turman Room of Preston Library. ✨



A rendering of the entry to Peay Hall to be located adjacent to Marshall Hall.—Image courtesy of Wiley|Wilson.



A rendering of Peay Hall.—Image courtesy of Wiley|Wilson.

# POST BRIEFS

## Money Magazine Ranks VMI No. 5

VMI came in at No. 5 overall out of the more than 620 colleges ranked on Money magazine's 2022 Best Colleges in America list. This is a jump from No. 26 in the last list published in 2020. VMI was also ranked highly in the small school size and public school lists. The publication reports that ten years after enrolling, students who attend VMI post median early career earnings of nearly \$72,000.

VMI is in good company in the top five overall with University of Michigan, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of

Virginia, and Massachusetts Maritime Academy. The rankings include U.S. colleges reviewed on 24 factors in three main categories: quality, which notes graduation rates and instructor access at each school; affordability, looking at short and long-term affordability, net price of a degree, and amounts typically borrowed through federal programs; and outcomes, which is primarily based on reported earnings and employment data. The full 2022 list can be found at [www.money.com/bestcolleges](http://www.money.com/bestcolleges).

## Astphan Named Deputy Inspector General/Title IX Coordinator

Lt Col. Alyssa Astphan has been named the Institute's new deputy inspector general/Title IX coordinator. Astphan had served both cadets and employees in her role as assistant director of Auxiliary Services and as an assistant IG/Title IX coordinator performing investigations. She

has been active in coordinating Gender Diversity and Inclusion programming for cadets, contributing to Bystander Intervention Training, and has extensive service as a battalion commander in the Virginia Army National Guard.

## Cadets Participate in Cyber Showcase

Several cadets participated in the inaugural Commonwealth Cyber Initiative Student Researcher Showcase in mid-March at Virginia Tech. VMI's undergraduate researchers included Kolby Quigg '24, Tanner Mallari '22, and Tristan Dennis '22, with Dr. Sherif Abdelhamid, professor

of computer and information sciences, serving as the faculty principal investigator. The VMI team presented a modeling environment to study and analyze wireless 5G networks as complex systems. Quigg was one of the Best Poster Award winners. 🏆

## Norwegian Foot March

More than 180 cadets undertook the Norwegian Foot March on April 9, a physical challenge in which participants rucked 18 miles within four and a half hours with at least 25 pounds in their ruck.

Upon completion of the march, or Marsjmerket, participants received the Norwegian Proficiency Badge and added it to their VMI uniform and U.S. Army uniform. A demonstration of international cooperation, the march is considered by many to be one of the most challenging foreign military badges to obtain. —VMI

Photos by Eric Moore.



placed on their education in the virtual classroom, physical training had limitations, sports seasons were rescheduled or postponed, internships went virtual or were canceled, and even military training drastically evolved.

Wins noted that things began to return to a more normal cadet experience for the Class of 2022 during the past year, when they not only succeeded in completing their own cadetships, but also in running a professional Rat Line for the Class of 2025. “A crisis brought on by COVID-19 stared you down, but you succeeded as adaptable leaders,” said Wins.

Wins concluded his speech by congratulating the graduates and encouraging them to hold onto the concept of honor, the very bedrock of VMI. “People will measure your character by a high standard because you are a VMI graduate. Embrace the heritage of those that have successfully followed this narrow path. Strive to preserve and enhance the foundation of honor you live by,” closed Wins.

Christopher Hulburt '22, peer-elected valedictorian, addressed his brother rats by talking about the values that brought them all to VMI, and the moments that kept them there. “Unique individuals come to VMI, those who are eager, confident, and ultimately naïve,” he said, followed by laughter from the audience. He stated that students are drawn to the Institute by words like honor, courage, and duty, but quickly learn that VMI is an unusual place that offers unique challenges.



Noah Kirk '22, president of the Class of 2022, addresses his brother rats on May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Jim Kavanaugh, CEO of World Wide Technology, addresses the Class of 2022 in Cameron Hall on May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

*See Graduation, page 10*



## Valedictorian Hulburt Addresses Graduates

Christopher M. Hulburt '22, valedictorian of the Class of 2022, spoke during commencement about the importance of attributes like honor, duty, excellence, and integrity. Without a doubt, his peers believe that Hulburt epitomizes those qualities, as each class elects their valedictorian based on those virtues.

Hulburt described being elected valedictorian as a humbling experience. "I know the other four candidates who were on that ballot, and they are all fine cadets. I was excited that my fellow cadets awarded me with the opportunity to address them and wish them well at commencement," stated Hulburt.

During his remarks, Hulburt shared the short but meaningful moments that kept the class at VMI. Many were funny, and helped deal with the stress that comes with being a cadet. Some were poignant and awe inspiring. Some provided a sense of accomplishment, some a sense of fulfillment, and some provided small pits in their stomachs. He summarized, "We came to VMI for many reasons, but we stayed for one another. Let us meet society's loudest critics with the decency, care and devotion that we have shown one another."

In closing, Hulburt shared that the last year has been challenging and grievous. He mourned the loss of his father. He revealed that he keeps a list on his phone of hundreds of names of those who have offered support to him throughout the year. "Whenever I feel the need for encouragement, I look at the names on the list and think of you. I take considerable pride in calling you my brother rats, and look forward to marveling at your accomplishments."

Col. M. Houston Johnson V, Ph.D., professor and head of the history department said, "Chris exemplifies the ideals of a VMI cadet—his strength of character, academic excellence, and service to the Institute

highlight his commitment to the core values for which the Institute stands. I have had the pleasure of serving on Chris' honors committee, teaching him in class, and traveling with him to Serbia and Bosnia on the Olmsted Foundation cultural immersion trip during spring furlough. In all these interactions, Chris' thoughtfulness and desire to make the most of his opportunities were manifest; he is an engaging young man who serves as a positive influence for those around him."

Hulburt graduated as a distinguished graduate with Institute honors, having sustained a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 and completed a cross-disciplinary honors curriculum, including writing a research-based honors thesis, in addition to his major and minor requirements.

He majored in history and minored in literary studies and Spanish. He served as president of VMI's Omicron Delta Kappa Circle, was a peer consultant at the Writing Center, was Company G executive officer, a member of Phi Alpha Theta and Sigma Delta Pi, parade announcer, and a prosecutor on the Honor Court, of which he is especially proud. "Being prosecutor is a meaningful and important task at VMI. It isn't fun, but for VMI's honor code to have meaning, to be able to trust my fellow cadets as well as the alumni, violators of the honor code must be prosecuted," said Hulburt.

Hulburt graduated from Eastwood High School in El Paso, Texas. He is the son of the late Michael W. Hulburt Jr. and Shay L. Reed-Hulburt of El Paso. He is the grandson of the late U.S.M.C. Lt. Col. Don Travis Reed '64 and Diane M. Reed, also of El Paso, and Michael W. and Kathleen

Bradley Hulburt who reside in Baker City, Oregon.

After commencement, Hulburt will take a gap year to work in the private sector, then plans to enter law school at the University of Virginia. "UVA offers a dual program where I can earn my master's degree in history and my juris doctor degree simultaneously," said Hulburt. He wants to specialize in criminal or constitutional law and ultimately become a prosecutor.

— By Marianne Hause



Chris Hulburt '22, valedictorian, shares fond memories of his cadetship during his speech in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

He acknowledged that their cadetship has been marked by vocal critics questioning the system that defines their daily lives at VMI. “In a time when several hundred of our peers in Colorado Springs, Annapolis, and West Point have collectively admitted to violating their honor, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to honesty, academic integrity, and responsibility,” he declared, to a loud roar of applause and cheers.

Noah Kirk '22, class president, addressed his peers before introducing the commencement speaker. He told them that his time at VMI was “four of the longest short years” of his life. He shared that as a class, they have learned many lessons and shared many memories. “Our character, reverence for honor and truth, our intellect and endurance, our creativity, all leave a lasting impact on everyone we meet.” He concluded by saying, “We will leave a wake of growth everywhere we go, and together I genuinely believe, that this class will change the world.”

Kirk then welcomed James “Jim” Kavanaugh, co-founder and chief executive officer of World Wide Technology (WWT), a technology company employing nearly 7,500 people. For the past 11 years, WWT has been listed as one of Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work For, and Kavanaugh has been highly rated on several Glassdoor CEO rankings.

Kavanaugh graduated from Saint Louis University and was a member of the 1984 U.S. Olympic soccer team. He was a chairman and founder of Saint Louis Football Club, a team in the United Soccer League. He now is an investor owner in the Saint Louis City Soccer Club, a new Major League Soccer franchise. In addition to

supporting the athletic community, Kavanaugh is very active in the nonprofit community. He served as president of the board for St. Patrick Center, an organization serving the homeless in Missouri. He has led very successful campaigns for the American Cancer Society, allowing the renovation of a home-away-from-home for cancer patients and their caregivers. Other organizations Kavanaugh has supported include the ALS Association, Toys for Tots, Junior Achievement, and United Way.

Kavanaugh spoke about what it takes to build a world-class life and to become a world-class leader. He challenged the cadets to think about what they consider to be their next phase in life. “Is it a job, a career, or a calling?” he asked. “Ask yourself, what are your goals, values and behaviors, write them down and reflect on them daily,” he advised.

Kavanaugh also warned the cadets never to underestimate the importance of hard work and perseverance. “The harder I worked, the luckier I got,” he joked, but the point was taken seriously. He continued to say that grit and determination got him through hard times.

He advised his audience to always be courageous and true. “Stand up for yourself and for those around you.” He warned that being a leader is not always easy and advised the cadets to learn how to have difficult but constructive and productive conversations. “Take chances, don’t be afraid to make mistakes, and don’t let your setbacks crush you, this is how you learn and grow. Remain humble and grounded.”

Kavanaugh concluded his speech by challenging the cadets to give back and make a positive impact. He noted that there is a contagious

effect of good deeds that transcends the world.

Three awards are traditionally given at VMI’s May commencement exercises. The First Jackson-Hope Medal for highest attainment in scholarship, accompanied by the Commander Harry Millard Mason Academic Proficiency Award, went to Joseph Malazo '22, an international studies major who earned a minor in national security and commissioned into the Navy.

Receiving the Second Jackson-Hope



Members of the Class of 2022 show their excitement during the ceremony on May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

*Continued on next page*

Medal, accompanied by the Col. Sterling Murray Heflin 1916 Academic Proficiency Award, was John Delaney '22, an English major with a triple concentration in literary studies, philosophy, and rhetoric and writing.

Rachael Dickenson '22 received the Society of the Cincinnati Medal, which recognizes efficiency of service and excellence of character. The Society of the Cincinnati Medal is accompanied by the Richard J. Marshall and Sumter L. Lowry Awards.

Commencement concluded with the incoming regimental commander relieving the Class of 2022 of their duties as they tossed their gloves in the air. ✨



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 presents Rachael Dickenson '22 with the Society of the Cincinnati Medal during the commencement ceremony held in Cameron Hall May 16.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



## Poetry Night

Moody Hall was a full house on the evening of April 27 as cadets and faculty joined together for Poetry Night, an event held by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures.

More than 70 cadets recited poetry representing several languages, backgrounds, and time periods, including pieces in Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish, and Italian. Several participants also recited original works.

"Poetry Night is an enriching experience when we come together to share the musicality and universality of poetry, celebrating our diverse languages and cultures," said Lt. Col. Abbey Carrico, associate professor of French. "The cadets were inspiring in the time they took to practice (some even singing!) and the care they took in reciting the poems."—VMI

Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

# ROTC Commissions Nearly 200

By Marianne Hause

Nearly 200 young men and women, most of them VMI cadets, commissioned into the armed services in Cameron Hall on Sunday, May 15 in the annual ROTC Joint Commissioning Ceremony. The ceremony was livestreamed for family and friends who could not attend the event in person.

The four commissioning officers who administered the oath of office were Army Lt. Gen. David G. Bassett, a 1988 graduate of the University of Virginia, who serves as the director of the Defense Contract Management Agency, headquartered at Fort Lee, Virginia; Marine Corps Gen. Eric Smith, a 1987 graduate of Texas A&M, who is the 36<sup>th</sup> assistant commandant of the Marine Corps; Navy Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, a 1983 graduate of Old Dominion University; and, Air Force Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chief of staff of the Air Force and a 1984 graduate of Texas Tech.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, welcomed those in attendance, and thanked the ROTC departments, faculty, staff, family members, and guests who supported and encouraged the cadets throughout their time at VMI. He noted that the ceremony was the culmination of four or more years of intense work on the part of each cadet, while marking the beginning of a life of service to the nation. "Moreover, it is the fulfillment of one of the central purposes of the Virginia Military Institute: the preparation and education of citizen-soldiers," said Wins. Wins shared his experiences after commissioning as a young officer. "My life was soon filled with exacting missions, tough training, rapidly changing responsibilities, assignments around the world, attendance at outstanding professional military schools, and service under remarkable leaders. Above all, I became part of a great team of soldiers, sailors,



Cadets commissioning into the armed forces march into Cameron Hall for the joint commissioning ceremony on May 15.—  
VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

airmen, marines, and service families. You, too, will come to cherish these same experiences," he reflected.

Wins closed by congratulating the cadets. "The Institute could not be prouder of you. Our country is fortunate to have more citizen-soldiers and leaders like yourselves."

Bassett was then introduced by Maj. Corey Weiss, assistant professor of military science at VMI. Bassett addressed the Army cadets by assuring them that there is a range of ways to contribute their skills to the Army and to the nation, and that each one would make a difference. He reflected that the world is experiencing uncertain times and as junior officers, they would lead the military. He instructed the cadets that "Your soldiers will take care of you, but they won't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." He continued, "Caring is not weakness, caring demonstrates strength." Bassett then addressed the family members in attendance and encouraged them to continue the support they have shown their cadets. He quoted Gen. Ray Odierno, "The strength of our nation is

our Army. The strength of our Army is our soldiers, and strength of our soldiers is our families." He then administered the oath of office to 114 cadets, commissioning them as second lieutenants.

According to Capt. Colin J. Reynolds, assistant professor of military science, four commissioning cadets stand out as exceptional leaders: Gavin Bryce Bowman '22, Thomas A. Chelednik III '22, Rachael A. Dickenson '22 and Christopher H. Soo '22. "They are each a distinguished military graduate, a distinction reserved for the top 20% of all cadets in the nation, and they each excelled in academic, physical, and military proficiency," said Reynolds.

Bowman was a platoon leader in Company C and a prosecutor on VMI's Honor Court. He is the top cadet branched in the armory and is the most academically proficient cadet in the military science curriculum. "VMI provides an atmosphere to refine leadership skills and teaches you how to care for other people, which goes a long way

*Continued on next page*

VMI Institute Report

in leadership positions,” said Bowman. He is a biology major, a distinguished graduate, and was pinned by a family member, who is an Air Force lieutenant colonel, retired.

Chelednik served as Company C commander for the 2021–22 academic year and was primarily responsible for planning and executing training events to prepare junior cadets prior to attending ROTC Advanced Camp. “I decided to join the Army through ROTC because I wanted to pursue a career in which I could look back with feelings of pride, fulfillment, and satisfaction,” said Chelednik. When asked what he would advise incoming cadets he replied, “Surround yourself with people who push you and make you stronger. Seek out those who are better than you, watch what they do and model them.” He majored in international studies, double minored in national security and Arabic, and is a distinguished graduate. His parents pinned him.

Dickinson is top female cadet and No. 8 overall in the VMI Army ROTC program. She is a NCAA cross-country and track athlete and achieved the highest score of any female in this year’s graduating class on the Army Combat Fitness Test. She is also the top cadet from the program who branched Corps of Engineers. She has a family legacy of VMI graduates, including her father, Glenn Kevin Dickenson ’90, her sister, Sarah E. Dickenson ’18, and her brother, John C. Dickenson ’20. “We each came to VMI for our own reasons,



Nathan Martin '22 receives his first salute after commissioning into the Marine Corps on May 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

not specifically to follow in our father’s footsteps, as much as we love and admire him,” explained Dickenson. She double majored in civil engineering and biology with a minor in Spanish. Her father and mother pinned her.

Soo is the executive officer for Company A, which is responsible for training new cadets. He is the No. 2 cadet in the VMI Army ROTC program and the No. 7 cadet nationally. He aspires to go into special operations



Christopher H. Soo '22 is pinned in Marshall Hall as he commissions into the U.S. Army.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

civil affairs. “Everything the alumni say about VMI helping you endure strife is true. Enduring the hardships in the Rat Line and the monotony of cadet life will help you maintain your composure when those around you lose theirs. That’s your time to become the citizen-soldier, the leader into which VMI has molded you,” stated Soo. He majored in Spanish and minored in Asian studies. He is this year’s winner of the Adolfo Ponzanelli Award, which is presented to a 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet for excellence in the study of modern languages and cultures. The honor of pinning him went to his two rats.

Marine Corps commissions were next with Smith being introduced by Col. Travis Homiak ’95, commanding officer of Naval ROTC. Smith spoke about integrity and moral character. “Your integrity will be tested on the battlefield. Don’t return home without your honor,” he stressed. “Wear your moral armor, carry that shield with honor, and return from combat carrying it.” He asked family members in attendance to “hold these new Marines to a moral and ethical standard that is almost unattainable.”

He then administered the oath of office to 19 cadets, commissioning them as second lieutenants.

According to Col. Homiak, two cadets who commissioned into the Marine Corps stood out among their peers: Luke Nicksic ’22 and Nathan Martin ’22. “Nicksic is the definition of a professional who constantly strives for self-improvement,” said Homiak. “As a Marine Corps scholarship recipient, he achieved an outstanding cumulative GPA of 3.87. Outside of classes,

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Nicksic maintained the highest attributes of a future Marine Corps officer. He was on the NCAA wrestling team and most recently the NROTC Battalion S2, where he was responsible for assisting other cadets improve their academic standing, which he did flawlessly, using a system he created.” Nicksic majored in economics and business, and minored in Arabic. He is this year’s winner of The John W. and Jane M. Roberts Award, presented for outstanding performance by a 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet in the economics and business major. His parents pinned him.

Martin majored in biology and is one of the recipients of this year’s General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. Sixth Marine Division Awards, presented to the top two Marine 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadets in the Naval ROTC program. His parents pinned him. “Martin is a natural leader in his own right and an outstanding example of a future Marine Corps officer,” stated Homiak. “After graduating Officer Candidate School as the Honor Graduate last summer, Martin brought the leadership lessons he learned back to the NROTC Battalion as the Battalion commanding officer. He oversaw all Navy and Marine Corps midshipmen in the battalion, totaling over 300. Under his supervision, the battalion completed the semester successfully including the planning and execution of spring field training exercises.”

Homiak also introduced Whitesell, who thanked family members for their support of the cadets entering the Navy. He acknowledged the current turmoil in the world, and advised the cadets that the oath they would soon take will “inspire and guide them” in the challenges they will face as young officers. He then administered the oath of office to 30 cadets, commissioning them as ensigns.

Homiak cited two outstanding cadets entering the Navy, Jacob Benny ’22 and

Makenna Moore ’22. “Benny has proven to be one of VMI NROTC’s most well-rounded leaders,” stated Homiak, “During his four years in the NROTC program he has maintained a 3.5 GPA and outstanding physical readiness scores, while holding important leadership positions and maintaining an internship with NASA. During the spring semester, he excelled as the NROTC battalion executive officer, the second highest position in the battalion. He also completed



Makenna Moore '22 receives her shoulder boards from her parents during the Navy pin-on ceremony in Cameron Hall on May 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

his mechanical engineering capstone with NASA, a special capstone project for which he was selected by his department and required an internship starting his last year.” Benny majored in mechanical engineering with a concentration in nuclear engineering, and double minored in mathematics and physics. His parents pinned him at the commissioning ceremony.

Moore majored in mechanical engineering and minored in both mathematics and physics. She was the captain of the women’s water polo team for two years and was the 2022 recipient of VMI’s Three-Legged Stool, an award given to one athlete who excels academically, militarily, and athletically. She is this year’s winner of the Superintendent William H. Milton Jr. Class of 1920 Award,

presented to the top-standing 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet in mechanical engineering. Moore transferred to the NROTC department during her junior year, with aspirations of becoming a nuclear officer, and is commissioning as VMI’s sole female submarine warfare officer for 2022. She was pinned by her parents. “Moore is a superb representation of the high-quality officers that are being produced through the VMI NROTC program,” continued Homiak, “During her time in the VMI NROTC program, she maintained a 3.8 GPA and outstanding physical readiness scores, while also competing as a Division I water polo athlete.”

Brown was then introduced by Col. Philip “Coop” Cooper, commanding officer of Air Force ROTC. Brown administered the oath of office to 33 cadets, 29 into the Air Force, and four into the Space Force, commissioning them as second lieutenants.

According to Lt. Col. Michael “Keystone” Rose, recruiting officer for the Air Force ROTC, several of the Air Force cadets are remarkable. Holland Arnold ’22 achieved a rare and notable accomplishment by being accepted to Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS),

the military’s medical school in Bethesda, Maryland. She will be active duty in the Air Force while in school. She majored in chemistry and is a distinguished graduate. She is this year’s winner of The Floyd D. Gottwald Jr. ’43 Award in Chemistry, presented to the topstanding 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet in the chemistry major. Arnold credits VMI for opportunities afforded to her, that she had never imagined when she matriculated. “I would not change anything about my time at VMI and am extremely grateful for the opportunity to attend medical school following graduation,” said Arnold. Her parents and brother were with her during her individual oath ceremony. In August, she reports for

*Continued on next page*

medical school, where she plans to specialize in psychiatry.

Commissioning into the Space Force are four outstanding cadets, Zachary Farr '22, Jeremiah Gauding '22, Jerrod Hunziker '22, and Melvin Rubio '22.

Farr, a computer science major, will be a Space Force cyber officer, the first from VMI and one of 15 in the nation this year. He seeks to make a career out of the Space Force with the eventual goal of stepping foot on another planet. "I have been wildly enamored with space ever since I could look up, and have always known I would leave this planet for another during my lifetime. When this new branch came to be, I was fortunate to have earned a spot, and now I will work to realize my goal," declared Farr. He received his shoulder boards from his parents. He will begin training within the year at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Gauding will be going to Albuquerque, New Mexico to work under Air Force Research Labs as a developmental engineer. "It was by complete happenstance I ended up getting a commission in the Space Force. I thought it would be interesting to get in at the ground floor and see where it would take me. I will be working alongside members of the Air Force, as we all have the similar end goal in mind," said Gauding. He majored in electrical and computer engineering and is a distinguished Air Force ROTC graduate. He is this year's winner of the Stewart W.



Jeremiah Gauding '22 smiles during the Air Force ceremony in Memorial Hall just after he took his individual oath for the U.S. Space Force. —VMI Photo by Eric Moore.

Anderson '08 Memorial Award, presented to the top 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadet for superior academic performance in the electrical and computer engineering curriculum. His mother, a firefighter of 28 years with the Newport News fire department and a huge role model in her son's life, was part of his oath ceremony.

Hunziker was commissioned as an electrical developmental engineer and will work on satellite communications systems. "I was attracted to the Space Force due to the growth potential for technology. Space is a new battle frontier, and it presents unique engineering constraints, and I would love to be on the forefront of technological

advancements," stated Hunziker. He majored in electrical & computer engineering and graduated with distinction. His mother and father along with his fiancé were at his individual oath ceremony.

Rubio will be working at Los Angeles Space Force Base in California. "I was attracted to the Space Force because the creation of a new military branch is a unique experience, and I wanted to be a part of it. Being able to work and advance the mission of a newly created branch ex-

cites me and inspired me to try to join. I was also told that it was particularly difficult to try to get into the Space Force with the major I had, so I had to try to get in and prove others wrong," said Rubio, a civil engineering major and a distinguished graduate. Rubio credits the routine VMI instilled in him for four years with helping him become a better person both mentally and physically. His parents presented his shoulder boards.

A distinguished graduate has a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or above. A graduate with distinction has a cumulative GPA between 3.0 and 3.499. ✪

## Class of 1972 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Gift

During the weekend of April 22–24, the Class of 1972 celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion. At the Saturday morning reunion parade, the class presented the Institute with the initial proceeds of their effort: \$6,121,972 in gifts and commitments. The gift was presented by Peter Ramsey '72, John Fick '72, and Walter Chalkley '72. The superintendent, Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, and David L. Prasnicky, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer, accepted the gift.

Of the class's 250 brother rats, 174 participated in the campaign, giving the class a participation rate of 70%. Six widows and a friend of the class also made a gift or commitment.

The reunion campaign committee also asked the class to make a donation to the Class of 1972 Memorial Scholarship, and the brother rats responded positively, earmarking approximately \$1.25 million to the scholarship. —Photo courtesy of Dylan Palmer '24.



# Website Shares Cadets' 'Rewarding' Findings

By Marianne Hause

This semester, Lt. Col. Pennie Ticen, associate professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, decided to team with Maj. Jeff Kozak, head of archives and records management, for ERH 411: Fieldwork, a required course for English majors. Fieldwork projects give cadets opportunities to practice good citizenship by engaging in community-based service learning. Cadets' fieldwork experiences may also involve projects for business, professional or non-profit organizations, usually taking place off-post.

Ticen and Kozak offered the project on-post called "Cadet Life Over Time." It involved having the cadets delve into the wealth of VMI archives held at Preston Library, digitizing them, and building webpages. "From my first conversations with Major Kozak, I knew the archives had a wealth of physical materials that hadn't yet been prepared for digital access. I have known and worked with him since he was an archivist for the Marshall Museum Library, and I was confident he would be a strong partner for this project," said Ticen.

Twelve cadets taking the class worked in pairs and covered six eras, with some pairs highlighting interesting alumni:

1. Early Years (1830s to 1850s): the conversion of the state arsenal to the beginning of the Civil War.
2. Post-Civil War reconstruction era.
3. Turn of the Century (1885 to 1924).
4. World War I and VMI alumnus, Thomas Amory, Class of 1916.
5. Great Depression (1929 to 1936).
6. World War II and VMI alumnus, Richard Niess '44.

Michael Lawrence '23, who researched the Early Years with Joshua Farr '23, said that he had talked last semester with Ticen about what the class would encompass, and he looked forward to it. He was intrigued with the progression of how the state arsenal became VMI. "The cadets back then had a harder course load than we do, and because travel was slow back then, many of the cadets stayed here year-round," said Lawrence.

Francis Ripley '23, a double major in history and English, who researched the Great Depression era with Justine Curcia '22,



Jonathan Ballesteros-Novoa '24 points to a photo of barracks from the late 1800s during his final ERH 411: Fieldwork presentation on May 3.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

acknowledged, "I enjoyed the class because it gave me hands-on experience in archival research. In researching the Great Depression era, I discovered that the depression only mildly affected VMI, which in turn was able to support many in the Lexington area on which the depression had a greater impact."

Lancelot Wiemann '22, an English major who covered WWI with Michael Tempesta '22, confessed, "I did not expect this class to be fun or exciting, but after the first two meetings, I found myself thoroughly enjoying and looking forward to the class. While my partner and I were both interested in our research topic of WWI, the process of searching through a physical archive collection for information was a new experience for us. I was surprised with the vast amount of information available in the archives." Wiemann continued, "As a commissioning cadet, I found Thomas Amory's story to be especially inspiring. Amory died while selflessly putting the lives of his men before that of his own. As a future officer of Marines, I hope to follow Amory's example by putting others before myself."

Tempesta, agreed with Wiemann regarding the expanse of archived information. "We started with a handful of files, and were able to build a detailed profile on Thomas Amory," said Tempesta.

The other class participants were Kolton Dobson '23, Keenan Orr '23, Emma Faust '23, Jonathan Ballesteros-Novoa '24, James Mills '23, and Thomas Owen '23.

Kozak felt the results of the class were rewarding. "It is wonderful to be able to publicly display the cadets' work on the VMI website where it can serve as an inspiration to other cadets and the public, to learn more



Maj. Jeff Kozak welcomes cadets to the final ERH 411: Fieldwork class of the semester May 3 in Preston Library.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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about VMI's history. The biggest surprise for me was the variety of records that the cadets used from the archives during their research. I thought they might stick to one kind of record, but they did not hesitate to use many different types of records including

correspondence, annual reports, yearbooks, regulations, blueprints, newspapers, diaries and photographs," said Kozak.

The cadets' research webpages may be viewed at [www.vmi.edu/archives/online-exhibits/cadet-fieldwork-and-research](http://www.vmi.edu/archives/online-exhibits/cadet-fieldwork-and-research). ❀

## New Regimental Commander Takes Command

By Marianne Hause

The change of command parade was held Saturday, May 14 at 2 p.m., as the 182<sup>nd</sup> Regiment handed over leadership of the Corps of Cadets to 183<sup>rd</sup> Regiment for the 2022–23 academic year.

It was the last parade for Kasey Meredith '22, the first female regimental commander (RCO) in VMI history. Meredith, a native of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, majored in international studies with a minor in Spanish. "It's bittersweet," said Meredith, "I've loved my time at VMI and as RCO, but it's time to move on." She commissioned into the Marine Corps as a cyberspace officer.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 conducted the change of command ceremony, as Meredith relinquished the guidon to Wins, who in turn presented it to incoming RCO Blake Smith '23 from Crozier, Virginia.

As RCO, Smith hopes to set the example, motivate his fellow cadets, and encourage success at VMI. "I love and value VMI and



Blake Smith '23 receives the guidon from Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 as the new regimental commander at the change of command parade on May 14. —VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

want to give back to the school that has given me so much. My main goal within this position is to enable all cadets to have the opportunity to be successful at VMI in all aspects of cadet life." Smith went on to say he has been fortunate to have worked with multiple groups and organizations within the Corps of Cadets and is motivated by his daily interaction with them. He plans to commission into the Marine Corps.

As the 183<sup>rd</sup> Regiment took command of the Corps of Cadets, the 182<sup>nd</sup>

Regiment were relieved of their duty and commanded to "Fall out!" to the cheers and applause of their brother rats. The other 1<sup>st</sup> Class graduating cadets were excused from marching in the parade and enjoyed it seated in a place of honor.

Meredith, Noah Kirk '22, 1<sup>st</sup> Class president, and John Delaney '22, Honor Court president, joined Wins in taking review of the parade as the new regiment passed before them. ❀



Kasey Meredith '22, Noah Kirk '22, and John Delaney '22 joined Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 in taking review of the parade as the new regiment passed before them on May 14. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Kasey Meredith '22 places her name in the plaque in barracks that features the list of regimental commanders throughout VMI's history just after the parade. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

# International Exchange Cadets Inspire Camaraderie

By Marianne Hause

It is said that the way to international peace starts with friendship between peoples, countries, cultures, and individuals. After visiting with the six international exchange students, witnessing their rapport, friendship, fondness, and good-natured ribbing, one might conclude that world peace can be achieved.

Military exchange students come to VMI from military academies abroad and visit for one semester as part of a formal exchange agreement. They participate in the academic program, live in barracks, and may participate in athletics and other extra-curricular activities. Following the completion of their program at VMI, cadets return to the academy in their home nation. This semester, a total of six exchange students participated in the program: two from South Korea, two from Lithuania, and two from Poland.

Patricia Hardin, assistant director of international programs, said the main reason for the international exchange program is to expose VMI cadets to other cultures prior to graduation. "Even though we encourage our cadets to travel abroad during their time at VMI, not all of them are able. By having foreign cadets study at VMI, our cadets gain an understanding of other nations and their customs, and of course the exchange students get exposed to our culture and our military college," said Hardin.

Hyemin Koo is a cadet from Korea Military Academy (KMA) in Seoul, South Korea. Koo had always wanted to experience other cultures, so when she heard about the exchange program, she applied without hesitation. She chose VMI because she wanted to experience an American military college. Koo stated that there are more similarities than differences between VMI and KMA. "One large difference is that the commissioning and non-commissioning

cadets take classes together. KMA has only army cadets," stated Koo. She plans on keeping in touch with the friends she has made at VMI, a few of which plan to visit her in South Korea.

Jaehyun Lee, also from KMA, was impressed that VMI encourages both academics and physical training, in contrast to KMA which focuses more on academics. A memory Lee will always cherish is his time with his "battle buddies" while completing the Norwegian Foot March, a physical chal-



Military exchange cadets Mateusz Wos from Poland, Jaehyun Lee from South Korea, Rokas Sarkus from Lithuania, Hyemin Koo from South Korea, and Wiktor Koteras from Poland pose on the Parade Ground in early May. —VMI Photo by Eric Moore.

lenge in which participants rucked 18 miles within four and a half hours with at least 25 pounds in their ruck. "There is an adage, 'Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.' The foot march was painful, but worth it. We didn't give up. I'm proud of myself that I made it and I am grateful to my battle buddies," said Lee. Other fond memories are spending time with friends in Lexington, eating in restaurants, and enjoying karaoke nights, which he confessed with a laugh, "I did sing one or two songs." Due to the Korean schedule, both Koo and Lee have additional summer training when they return home, followed by another academic year. They will graduate in March 2023, and both plan a career in the military.

Wiktor Koteras and Mateusz Wos are from Military University of Land Forces in Wroclaw, Poland. Koteras saw an announcement regarding the VMI exchange program on his university's website and decided to apply. After passing the language test and two interviews, he was accepted. Koteras stated that subjects and classes are different at VMI than they are in Poland. "I chose to study history and international studies. Learning here is much more focused on your own work, and assignments are inter-

esting and encourage creativity," stated Koteras. He said he will always remember the Rat Line. "It was unusual, I have never seen anything like it. I watched Breakout, just moments after I arrived here, so I will remember that for a long time." Koteras was also impressed with a pistol course in which he participated. "I learned how to use different pistols, safety rules, weapon maintenance, and different types of ammunition. I spent a lot of time on the shooting range," he explained. Koteras enjoyed eating at Crozet Hall. "The food is great, so much to choose from. It's like a five-star restaurant," he mused. One food item he wasn't

pleased with was a pierogi, a traditional Polish dumpling. "My friends brought it to me in barracks to see my expression, but it was not as good as home." After returning to Poland, Koteras will undergo military training, a month's vacation, an internship as a commander of a military unit, then another academic year.

Wos, unlike Koteras, had never planned to study in another country. "My sister, after seeing the announcement on the university website, encouraged me to apply. After thinking about it briefly, I decided it was a great idea to meet cadets from another country," said Wos. He also was impressed

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with tradition at VMI, “The strong presence of tradition is visible every day, not just on a holiday. Another thing that made a huge impression on me were the reunions of graduates who can meet their companions from their studies and see the barracks in which they lived. It must be a great feeling to meet like this after years,” stated Vos. He was also grateful for the warm welcome he experienced at VMI. “When I meet American soldiers in Poland, I will also treat them with the hospitality that I have experienced here,” said Vos. After returning to Poland, Vos will have military training, and in September will be a commander of basic training for the new class of cadets. While

at VMI, he created a new basic training manual and exchanged knowledge and training approaches with VMI cadets. “My goal is to one day become a lecturer at my university. Training and educating future commanders would be rewarding to me,” stated Vos.

Rokas Sarkus is from General Jonas Zemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, in Vilnius, Lithuania. He learned about VMI from other Lithuanian cadets who were exchange students in 2015. They convinced him that it would be a great place to visit and study. “Last year, I lived with a VMI cadet in Lithuania. We really enjoyed our time together, and he talked a lot about the Institute,” said Sarkus. He stated that even

though VMI offers a lot of very interesting classes, the most important part of the exchange program is people and the new friendships he has formed. “I will never forget the great times spent in town with my friends. Who knows, maybe we will meet again. Even though Lexington is a small town, it is a very beautiful and interesting place.” Upon returning to Lithuania, Sarkus will work on field training exercises. He plans on sharing his VMI experiences with his fellow cadets there.

Before flying back to their home countries after commencement, the six cadets plan to enjoy their time with friends and exploring the natural resources of Virginia. ✪



## Rat Unity

The Class of 2025 joined together to support veterans and raised more than \$16,000 for Operation Enduring Warrior (OEW). After organizing and fundraising for their cause, the class welcomed OEW and veterans to post on April 30 for a culminating unity event. The class competed in company athletics, interacted with veterans, and presented their donation to OEW.

“It’s not for us, it’s for them,” said Nathan Benton ’25, cadet in charge of the event. “After a long six-week planning period, the event was a huge success. The purpose of this was to bring the honorees from OEW out and have them interact with the class and greater VMI community. The camaraderie of the class genuinely helped these veterans and OEW as an organization.”—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





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# Club Boxing Team Wins National Championship

By Eric Moore

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, met with the VMI club boxing team, known as the Regulators, after they reigned victorious as national champions with a stunning performance at the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association (USIBA) National Championships in Atlanta, Georgia March 17–19.

Cheered on by teammates, family, and friends, fourteen cadets gave standout performances in the tournament.

“Never have I participated in an individual sport that felt so much like a team sport,” Jon Christopher Duran '22 said. “Win or lose, every Regulator and spectating family members clouded over any sound during the tournament with their cheering and support. I am so proud to be part of this boxing family.”

The team went 20-8 in the tournament, scoring six knockouts, one technical knockout, nine unanimous decisions, and four split decisions. By the end of the weekend, five cadets sported championship belts, winning national championship and all-American honors as individuals by placing first in their respective weight classes. Seven cadets earned all-American individual honors by placing second in their respective weight classes.

They received praise from their coach, Joe Shafer, and from competitors for their preparation, dedication, and hard work.

“The team put everything on the line for this event and made me so proud as a coach,” Shafer said. “We represented the Institute with a fighting spirit: honoring VMI’s history, upholding the passions of our forefathers, and personifying the principles of excellence for VMI.”

“We differentiate ourselves with the intensity of our training, and it showed at Nationals,” Brian Carrera '22 added. “Our team has heart, and that’s what matters.”

VMI last achieved the national championship title in 2015 and prepared for this year’s tournament by holding bouts against Georgia Tech and the University of Maryland.

The team will receive championship rings during summer furlough. ✪

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Additional photos and videos can be found on Flickr and YouTube.

For the most accurate information and event updates, please visit [www.vmi.edu](http://www.vmi.edu).



The VMI championship boxing team poses with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, and their coach Joe Shafer May 12. –VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.