



INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 52, Number 6, March 2024

Honoring Capt. Jack Casey '19

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50TH ANNIVERSARY



Rising 1st Class Ranks Announced

Cadets gathered in Memorial Hall March 5 as the 1st Class rank announcements were made for the next academic year. The cadet captains for 2024–25 are Brian Pritchard, regimental commander; Justice Rozic, regimental executive officer; Carter Wasser, chief of staff; Rachel Roberson, 1st Battalion commander; William Roberts, 1st Battalion executive officer; Nicholas Hemstreet, 2nd Battalion commander; Gabriella Amos, 2nd Battalion executive officer; Melina Bulger, 3rd Battalion commander; Derick Gyimah, 3rd Battalion executive officer; Hannah Thompson, S1 captain; Elena Gutierrez, S2 captain; Laini Morgan, S3 captain; Timothy Krone, S4 captain; Carleigh Price, S4 EMS chief; Zachary Poche, S5 captain; Jonathan Burkett, S6 captain; Caleb Fender, S7 captain; Wyatt Brown, S9 captain; Connor Cherry, Company A commander; Tristen Stower, Company B commander; Cate Dowden, Company C commander; Coy Mattson, Company D commander; Jonah Jurack, Company E commander; Aaron Metz, Company F commander; Caroline Lassalle, Company G commander; Andrew Wright, Company H commander; Elijah Alberti, Company I commander; and John Kennedy, Band Company commander.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



INSTITUTE REPORT

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The Institute Report, VMI's news magazine, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or VMIReport@vmi.edu.
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Editor Lt. Col. Michelle Ellwood

Assistant Editor Kelly Nye

Designer Robbin Youngblood

Institute Report Staff

Marianne Hause

Apollo Lin '25

H. Lockwood McLaughlin

Andrew Partridge '24

Lexie West

Back Cover Photo

Kelly Nye

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On the cover: Ryan Beckman '27 charges the Parade Ground with the rest of the Rat Mass during Breakout Feb. 6.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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Author Shares Stories of Courage for Black History Month

By Marianne Hause

In honor of Black History Month, Robert Child, author of the book, “Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II,” spoke Feb. 19 as part of the Center for Leadership and Ethics’ Courageous Leadership speaker series. The event was co-sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion; the Dean’s Academic Speakers Program; and the George C. Marshall Foundation.

To a spellbound audience in Gillis Theater, Child shared the valiant and courageous stories of the seven African American WWII soldiers chronicled in “Immortal Valor.” In 1945, Congress awarded the Medal of Honor to 432 recipients, yet not one of the more than one million African Americans who served was among them. In 1997, more than 50 years after the war, President Bill Clinton finally awarded the Medal of Honor to those seven heroes, all but one, posthumously.

According to Child, the base criteria for the award was that the men had to have been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest military decoration for soldiers who display extraordinary heroism in combat with an armed enemy force, with the exception of Reuben Rivers, who received the Silver Star, the third-highest military decoration for valor in combat.

Through a series of short biographical videos and his own words, Child shared an abbreviated version of the gallant stories of the seven men.

Charles Thomas grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and was midway through his junior year at Wayne University when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. He was drafted into the Army, and became part of the new tank destroyer force whose mission was to seek, strike, and destroy enemy tanks. Thomas stood out among his peers with his mechanical engineering aptitude and several years of college behind him. His unit entered the European theater in early 1944, and immediately saw action. Thomas led his company up a foggy road into Climbach, France, five miles from the German border, where they were hit by German shells. The command car in which Thomas was riding struck a mine, blowing him and several other soldiers out of the vehicle. He was bleeding from wounds to his legs and arms, and several machine gun rounds caught him across the chest. In an interview afterward he stated, “My only thought was, ‘deploy the artillery, start firing, or we’re dead.’” The battle intensified, and after four hours of combat, three of the tank guns were destroyed by the enemy, and the fourth was out of commission, but the American infantry was able to circle the town, and Thomas was medically evacuated. Col. John Blackshear, who watched the battle, later wrote, “That was the most magnificent display of heroism I have ever witnessed.”

Vernon Baker was raised by his grandparents from the age of four, after his parents were killed in a car crash. After basic training at Camp Wolters, Texas, he joined the 370th Infantry Regiment at Fort



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 shakes hands with Robert Child during a book signing in Gillis Theater.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.

Huachuca, Arizona, was promoted quickly to staff sergeant, then sent to officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia. He graduated as a second lieutenant in January 1943 and was sent to Europe, where his unit was tasked with breaking through Hitler’s Gothic Line in Italy, in an area called the Triangle of Death. In a later interview, Baker recalled, “The whole regiment was trying to take those hills, battalion by battalion. The first battalion went up, and they got cut to pieces trying to get up there. The second battalion went up and got cut to pieces, and when they were driven back down, it was our turn.” So, on the morning of April 5, 1945, Vernon and his battalion of 26 men made it up to the castle fortress. Baker found out later that his regimental commander had been told that his men had all been wiped out, so no reinforcements were sent. Baker remained with his battalion though, to secure the strategic German castle fortress. He lost 19 of his 26 men. He was the only living black recipient of the seven selected, to be awarded the medal of honor at the White House. He told CNN after the ceremony, “I still don’t feel like a hero. I just feel like I was a soldier, and I did my job.”

Willy James Jr. grew up the only child of a widowed mother, and was drafted into the Army in 1942. In the aftermath of the Battle of the Bulge, the Allies were faced with shortages of men due to attrition. The oversupply of Black soldiers serving in supply units was matched by the under supply of white replacement soldiers for rifle companies on the front lines. James was one of more than 2,200 Black soldiers selected for an expedited four-week training course at the Ground Forces Reinforcements Center in France. He became a scout with the 413th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Arman J.

Continued on next page

VMI Institute Report

Cerebella. In March 1945, James' platoon was part of a convoy rolling from Cologne into the Rhine Valley. Crossing the Rhine River, they met and fought through stiff resistance, but on April 8, 1945, in the fog-shrouded village of Lippoldsberg, they faced their greatest test. James was sent ahead to scout the German positions, and reported back to Cerebella, who decided to enter the town. Unfortunately, the fog cleared, and James, who was on the opposite side of the road as Cerebella, cautiously moved forward, constantly checking on his commander. Suddenly James heard a German shell about 100 yards ahead, and saw that Cerebella had been shot by a sniper. James rushed to him and tried to pull him to safety, but he was cut down by machine gun fire. The heroism and sacrifice inspired the remainder of the platoon to push the armor forward.

Edward Carter Jr. was born to missionary parents, and was raised in India and Shanghai, China. When the Japanese attacked the International Settlement in Shanghai, Carter ran away from home and joined the Chinese army when he was 15 years old. He demonstrated both his marksmanship and bravery, but a month into his service, Carter's father arrived to take him back home. When his family returned to the United States, Carter enlisted into the Army, and was assigned to Gen. Patton's mystery division force that headed into hostile German territory after removing all uniform insignia and vehicle markings. Carter soon learned how exceptionally dangerous this mission was on a fateful

day in March 1945. Carter and his squad heard the ear-splitting recoil of a Panzerschreck, the German version of the bazooka, from a nearby abandoned warehouse. He immediately volunteered to lead a three-man squad in a dash across the field to the warehouse. One soldier behind him was riddled with machine gunfire immediately. Carter shouted to the other soldier to cover him as he moved forward, but that man was also struck down. At that point, Carter was too far forward to retreat, so he zigzagged his way forward as German machine gun fire hit him. Despite getting shot, he continued moving forward until the sharp stabbing pains caused him to topple over. Carter, still armed with his Thompson submachine gun, decided to wait the Germans out, since he knew they would come looking for him. After two hours, his opportunity came. As a German patrol approached, he pulled the Thompson out, thrust all his weight on his right leg to push himself up, and kept his finger on the trigger. In seconds, six Germans fell dead, and the remaining two German soldiers raised their hands in surrender. With superhuman strength, ignoring his pain, Carter held one soldier in front of him, and another behind him, using them as human shields to make his way back to the American position. After arriving safely, Carter interrogated



Robert Child signs copies of his book after his talk Feb. 19.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.

the German prisoners in German, which he had learned at Shanghai Military Academy. The POWs cooperated, and pointed out hidden enemy strongholds on a map. The accurate information allowed the Americans to advance with minimal loss of life.

George Watson was born to sharecroppers in Mississippi. He had a love of learning and an aptitude for math, and was an accomplished swimmer, a skill he would use later in the war. He attended Colorado State University in Fort Collins, and upon graduating in 1942, he was immediately drafted into the Army, and sent to Camp Lee, Virginia, to train as a laundry specialist in the Quartermaster Corps. By late January 1943, Watson arrived in the Southwest Pacific theater in Brisbane, Australia. He was assigned to the transport ship, Jacob, ferrying troops, weapons, and other supplies. On March

8, 1943, two squadrons of Japanese bombers escorted by 12 fighters, bombed the Jacob. The ship was completely ablaze and sinking, and the order was given to abandon ship. Watson, who had swum to a raft, could see crewmen leaping off the ship and others floundering the water. He left the raft and swam toward them, grabbing them one at a time, and pulling them to rafts and other floating debris surrounding the ship. He then saw a sailor waving his arms and trying to keep his head above water near the Jacob, which was almost entirely submerged. Watson swam toward the struggling sailor, but it was too late. The sinking

of the enormous vessel created a powerful vortex of suction which dragged Watson, and the men surrounding the vessel, under the waves into the ocean depths. For Watson's heroic efforts in saving his comrades, including his commanding officer, he was the first Black soldier to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Ruben Rivers grew up on a family farm with 11 brothers and sisters in Oklahoma. He was drafted into the Army in 1942, and was assigned to the 761st Tank Battalion, and in 1944, they were deployed to France. While advancing on the town of Guébling, Rivers' tank hit a mine, and his leg was slashed to the bone. Rivers refused all medical treatment, and instead commandeered a working tank, and continued to advance through Guébling, fighting on to the town of Bourgaltroff. His company met stiff German resistance, and his commander, Capt. David Williams, ordered the company to retreat. Over the radio, Rivers was heard saying, "I see 'em. We'll fight 'em!" He fought the Germans so the rest of the company could get to safety. During the encounter, his tank was hit, killing him instantly. Williams attended the White House ceremony in 1997 with the

50 Years of the Institute Report: Selfless Service

By Marianne Hause

The Institute Report officially turned 50 in December. 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. Stories of selfless service involving 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 back cover.

1976—Samuel Murphy '79 and George Walsh '80 rescued two adults and one infant from a burning building in which a third person died in Lexington. The two cadets were at soccer practice when they saw smoke coming from a building directly behind the soccer field, and used an athletic department van to rush to the scene.

1981—Daniel Brittingham '55 and his wife, Betsy, received the Service to Children Award from the Virginia Association of Children's Homes for their work with almost 100 dependent and needy boys and girls. Brittingham and his wife were directors of the Rockbridge Area Presbyterian Home.

1985—Hurricane Juan dumped over 10 inches of rain in early November causing the Flood of '85, and streams throughout the Valley of Virginia swelled to record flood levels, causing the Maury River to go on a rampage. Sections of Route 39 through Goshen Pass were washed out, closing the highway for several months. Responding to urgent appeals for help from the



Kevin Sincavage '87 helps with clean up efforts in Buena Vista after the November 1985 flood.—Photo courtesy of VMI Archives.

stricken communities, hundreds of cadets contributed more than 10,000 man-hours to the clean-up process. They shoveled mud, moved furniture and personal belongings, patrolled the streets, contributed money to the flood victims, and helped families and businesses take the first steps toward recovery. A hand lettered sign in the window of a flooded store in Buena Vista expressed the heartfelt thanks of a grateful community: “God bless you people and VMI cadets.”

1992—Lexington remembered the 50th anniversary of WWII with a series of events titled, “Memories of Heroes,” in addition to “Home of the Brave,” a WWII drama by Arthur Laurents performed in the VMI Theatre. There were many wartime connections to Lexington in 1942. Washington and Lee University was home to the Army Special Forces School for Personnel Services, while at

VMI, the Army Specialized Training Program was established.

Ra Yoeun '93, became a naturalized U.S. citizen during his 1st Class year. He was a refugee from Cambodia during the reign of terror waged by the Khmer Rouge and its merciless leader Pol Pot. He and his parents were sent to a communist re-education camp where his father, an officer in the Cambodian Air Force, was slaughtered. His mother died later of illness, and Yoeun was orphaned. Through a series of events, he eventually came to Richmond and found a home with foster parents, Robert and Jackie Spears.

1993—Husband and wife, James and Wilma Hobson, long-time VMI employees were highlighted. During his time at VMI, James worked for Cleaves Food Service, then as a VMI custodian, then as housekeeping supervisor. Wilma primarily worked as a housekeeper. They both had reputations as being tireless, dedicated, and reliable.

1995—The George C. Marshall Foundation Hall of Honor was dedicated. It recognized significant contributions of individuals to the Marshall Foundation since its establishment in 1953. The first four honorees to be inducted were former President Harry S. Truman; former Marshall Foundation president,



Continued on next page

Gen. Marshall S. (Pat) Carter, U.S. Army; Marshall Foundation trustee, J. Clifford Miller Jr., VMI Class of 1928; and Marshall Foundation trustee emeritus, Oveta Culp Hobby.

2011—Faculty and cadets vied during the Tough Mudder Virginia competition at the Wintergreen Resort to raise \$2,000 for the Wounded Warrior Project.

2018—VMI cadets formed up with the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets in Blacksburg to honor the memory of VT Cadet Matthew La Porte, who was among the 32 killed in the April 16, 2007 attacks on the Virginia Tech campus. As the shooter was coming into a classroom, La Porte seized the chance and charged the shooter. The act of courage enabled others to flee and saved lives.

Sgt. Beth Hunt, an investigator with the VMI Police Department, donated half her liver to the husband of a friend of a friend. For Hunt, it was the fulfillment of a childhood dream to become an organ donor.

2019—Army 1st Lt. Samuel Mueller '17, assigned to a mobile surveillance team assisting U.S. Border Patrol Agents, helped



Col. Gary Bissell '89 and Capt. Chad Joyce pose for a photo after participating in the Tough Mudder at Wintergreen Resort in 2011.—VMI File Photo by Amy Goetz.

rescue a mother and child from the fast-moving currents in a canal in El Paso, Texas.

2020—Hundreds of boxed meals were prepared each day by Parkhurst Dining in support of cadets in quarantine and isolation.

A groups of parents organized to assemble and transport 1,790 pandemic care packages to cadets. The packages contained items ranging from hot chocolate mix and candy to beef jerky.

U.S. Space Force Capt. Even Rogers '10, visited his mother and stepfather in Arizona in April. While biking the Adobe Jack Trail there, he came upon Sydney Linden, a runner who had tripped and fell just a few minutes earlier, and fractured her tibial plateau. As he learned in his VMI cadet training, he lifted her and carried her for a half-mile using the fireman's carry. After insuring she got to the hospital safely, Rogers went back up the trail to retrieve his bike. That could have been the end of the story, but for an article in the "Sedona Red Rock News" in which Linden had been interviewed looking for her "trail angel." She only knew his first name and that he was in the Air Force. Rogers emailed the writer of the story who then passed along Linden's phone number, which led to a blossoming romance.

Three generations of Craneys have worked a collective 180-plus years at VMI. Cheryl Craney; her brother Ed "Cake" Craney Jr.; their father, Edward Craney Jr.; his identical twin brother, Clarence Craney Jr.; their two sisters, Nettie Jo Carter and Willa Mae Turner; and their father, Clarence "Turk" Craney Sr., who worked in Crozet Hall for 35 years.

2021—The Building BRIDGES Club, a community service club, shared the holiday spirit with senior citizens living in elder care facilities during the lonely and isolated time of the



Sgt. Beth Hunt and Rex Miller pose for a photo after their surgeries at the UVa Medical Center in December 2018.—Photo courtesy of Sgt. Beth Hunt.

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Former CIA Officer Brings Principles of Leadership to VMI

By Marianne Hause

Marc Polymeropoulos, former senior intelligence officer for the CIA, spoke at VMI Feb. 6 as part of the Center for Leadership and Ethics' (CLE) Courageous Leadership speaker series. According to Col. David Gray, director of the CLE, this year's leadership theme is "Adapting to Complex Situations," and Polymeropoulos had a career doing exactly that. "He has had to live with the consequences of decisions he's made under high stress, and in very intense circumstances," Gray said.

Polymeropoulos spoke in Gillis Theater to a crowd of cadets, faculty and staff, and community members, about the nine leadership principles addressed in his book, "Clarity in Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the CIA." "These principles I learned during my career, after making a ton of mistakes. I learned many of them from the streets of Third World places like Baghdad. The principles build on each other and have real world applicability. They are for leading in times of ambiguity, like when your business is failing, or if you're a doctor or a nurse working in an emergency room, and certainly for a VMI cadet who is under a lot of pressure," Polymeropoulos explained.

The first, and Polymeropoulos' favorite leadership principle, he calls, "The Glue Guy," which refers to critical and indispensable team members. "These are behind-the-scenes people who hold your team together. For a cadet, it may be a roommate, teammate, or company member. Identify them, celebrate them, and forward plan with them. When times of trouble happen, you will rely on them," he stated.

The second principle is "Adversity is the PED to Success." While Polymeropoulos was quick to state that he doesn't condone performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), he explained that adversity is a superfuel for success. "You can't succeed in less than ideal conditions if you haven't failed first. It's how you grow." He offered the example of legendary basketball star, Michael Jordan. "What happened with Michael Jordan as a sophomore in high school? He was cut from the team, but he used that sting of rejection as a motivator, and became one of the greatest players of all time," he declared.

Third is "Trust the Process." "Everyone hates the word 'process,' but think about what this means in times of trouble. Imagine you're leading a team, communications are down, and you don't have situational awareness. You want to have two to four foundational things that your team is really good at. The idea is 'how you do anything, is how you do everything.' Innovate along the way, be creative, but don't cheat the system." To illustrate, he shared a story of a time he was running an operational unit with 200 people, and a billion dollar budget. "There was an offshoot of al-Qaida called al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, located in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, who wanted to blow up U.S. airlines and U.S. embassies, and our job was to stop

them. I was going to the White House often to brief the National Security Council. They knew our unit, and we were kicking butt. We got praised all the time because we were removing terrorists from the battlefield who were planning to kill Americans. Then one day we made some mistakes, and we incurred many casualties, and hurt people we shouldn't have. All of a sudden, the same White House is really angry with us, and I had to report to CIA headquarters. I told them, 'Look, let me just tell you something, it's my fault, I take full responsibility.' Now, of course, at that point, I knew which officers who worked for me made those mistakes, but it didn't matter. I told CIA leadership that we identified three things that caused the mistakes, and were in the process of fixing those three things,

so those mistakes will not happen again. I had expected to be fired, but they were satisfied with me taking responsibility and fixing the problem. I kept my job, and I went back to my team and told them what happened. They were happy with me too, because their boss kind of took the bullet for them."

Polymeropoulos' fourth principle is "Humility is Best Served Warm," and considers this the most important trait of an intelligence officer. "Great leaders own their mistakes and learn from them; poor leaders make

scapegoats of others, and deflect. In your jobs and careers, you can have that sense of competence, but having that sense of humility is super important."

Fifth is, "Win an Oscar." "There is no day off from being a leader. A lot of people don't understand the concept that leaders are on display all the time. All eyes are on us no matter what, and we must be authentic," Polymeropoulos said.

"If you want your men and women to follow you into the fire, they need to believe in you and each other, which leads to the sixth principle, 'Family Values,'" explained Polymeropoulos, who shared a dark time in his life when he was suffering from post-traumatic stress. "I was having terrible nightmares, and my wife was terrified I was going to hurt myself. I was in denial, and refused to seek help. So, she called my good friend Charlie, who rounded up our original team from Baghdad, and rented cottages in Cape Cod, for all 20 of us and our families. We were there for two weeks, enjoying each other.



Marc Polymeropoulos speaks in Marshall Hall Feb. 6.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Continued on next page

VMI Institute Report

Charlie personifies family values and believing in our team, and I really started feeling better because of what he did.”

“Be a People Developer” is the seventh principle. “Toward the end of my career, I started having mentoring sessions with all the young officers coming into the CIA. I realized, that’s how I’m going to be remembered. That’s really important. How will you be remembered? How do you want to be remembered? That’s why I love coming and talking to groups. I love seeing young, patriotic Americans who are interested in national security. I’m passing the torch to you. My time is long gone. It’s time for you all,” Polymeropoulos shared.

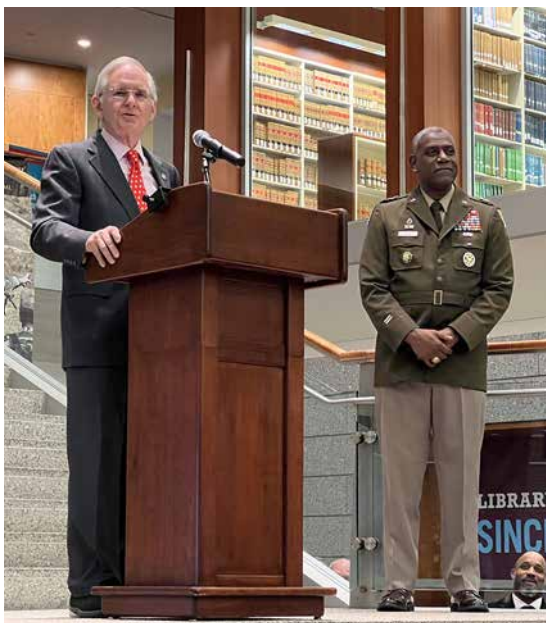
The eighth principle is, “Employ the Dagger.” Polymeropoulos explained that to inspire healthy competition and excellence, many sports teams have an object they use to encourage their players. When players do well, their reward is to hold or wear that object for a time. “Virginia Tech baseball uses the homerun celebration sledgehammer. When I was in the Middle East, I wanted to motivate my teammates in a similar way, so I bought a dagger at the local market for \$10. I would give that to any member of the team who did something really special. After a while, everyone started competing for the dagger. It wasn’t worth anything, but it fostered a sense of competition.”

The ninth and final principle is “Finding Clarity in the Shadows,” and is most effective after the previous eight principles have been mastered. Polymeropoulos stated that one must keep themselves healthy, and there are specific ways to do that. “I drink water. Staying hydrated is critical, as well as proper nutrition and exercise. When we were in conflict zones, we were always stressed out. Even if we were working 18 hours a day, we went to the gym. Exercise is huge. High performance athletes also do things like meditation, yoga, and deep breathing. Journaling is also an accepted way of helping with stress and mental health. I encourage everyone to employ the 14:24 principle. That’s 14 minutes out of 24 hours to take for yourself, to get some kind of exercise, or some kind of meditation. It’s 1% of your 24 hours, you can do that,” he advised in closing.



Marc Polymeropoulos speaks to Cassandra Layne’s international studies class Feb. 5.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

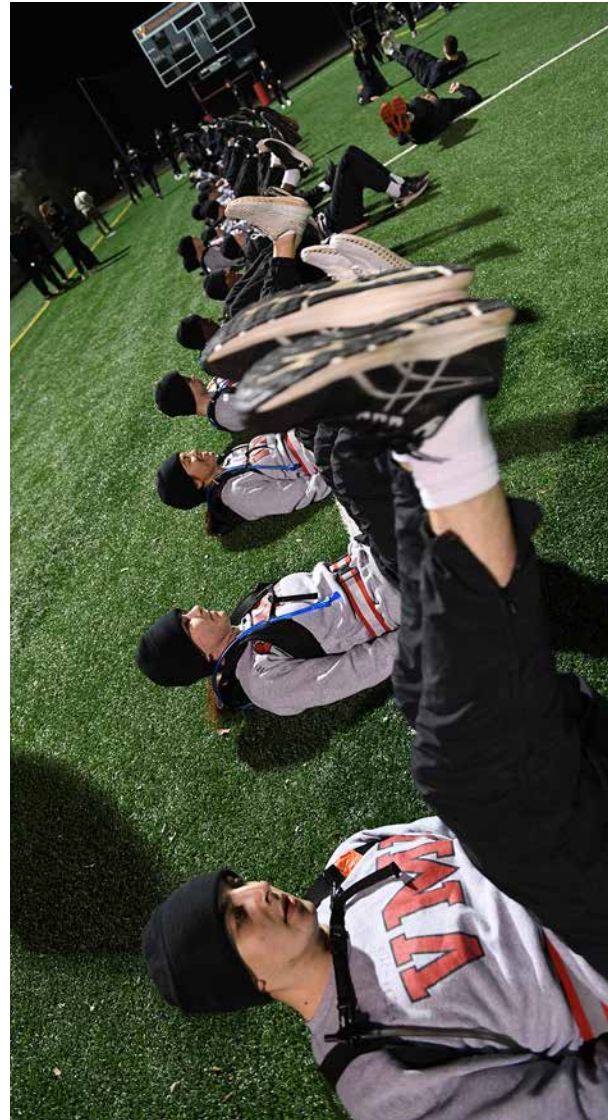
Polymeropoulos retired from the Senior Intelligence Service ranks in 2019, after serving 26 years in the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) in the operational field and leadership assignments. He is an expert in counterterrorism, covert action, and human intelligence collection, and is one of IC’s most highly decorated field officers. He spent extensive time South Asia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Just prior to his retirement, he served at CIA headquarters and oversaw the CIA’s clandestine operations in Europe and Eurasia. He is a nonresident fellow in the foreign defense practice at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Security and strategy. He frequently comments on international events in the media, including in the Washington Post, the New York Times, Fox News, GQ, Yahoo News, CNN, and MSNBC. ✪



Legislative Reception

Alumni, faculty, staff, and cadets gathered at the Library of Virginia in Richmond on the evening of Feb. 22 to thank members of the legislature for their service and support to VMI. Recently retired Sen. Thomas K. Norment Jr. '68, who was recognized for his three decades of service, offered words of gratitude to those who helped him along the way, and expressed his excitement for others from VMI to continue the work in state legislative roles.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





Breakout

The day after Little John was fired in barracks for a fake out, the real Breakout took place Tuesday, Feb. 6. Cadre woke the Rat Mass at 5 a.m. for training activities before breakfast, then they participated in a normal academic day. Breakout activities resumed in the afternoon, including a log march, a crawl across the Parade Ground, and stoop workouts. Stephen L. Neas II '77, adjunct professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, was the guest speaker at the Breakout dinner. Neas offered highlights of his cadetship, including an opportunity to speak to alumni from the VMI Class of 1924. Speaking to the class of 100 years later and their rats, he focused on three lessons from the Rat Line. First, he reminded them that they accomplished something big, and to remember that when they face difficult times in the future. Second, they did it as a group, and that being a leader means you're only successful if your whole group is successful. And third, he told them the VMI honor system is a universal truth they should embrace well after their cadetship. The evening concluded with the first Old Yell for the Class of 2027. —VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.



Selfless Service *continued from page 7*

coronavirus pandemic. Fourteen members of the club, 21 VMI faculty and staff members, eight members of the Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership honor society, plus members of the men's soccer and wrestling teams, took time during Christmas furlough to handwrite letters to residents of Kendal and Heritage Hall.

2022—Adam Gild '24 helped save the life of a man who was in a horrific highway collision. Gild kept talking to the victim, keeping him calm, and prevented him from moving. Gild credits his VMI training for developing the mental fortitude to appropriately respond in such an emergency.

2023—Erik Gottmann '25, his two brothers, Troy and Hans, along with a friend, helped rescue avalanche victims while on a family skiing trip in Zürs, Austria, during Christmas furlough.

Trivia Questions

1. What was the estimated total damage dollar amount in the Rockbridge area from the Flood of '85?
2. What was the total damage dollar amount to VMI from the Flood of '85?

3. In 1981, Daniel Brittigan held the position of assistant professor in what department?
4. What department did twin brothers, Clarence and Edward Craney work?
5. What did the ski patrol tell Erik Gottman to look for in search of buried avalanche victims?



Parents unload boxes of pandemic care packages for cadets in front of barracks during the Covid-19 pandemic.—VMI File Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Midwinter Formal

No wipe outs, just a lot of fun as Cocke Hall was transformed into a winter ski lodge complete with falling snowflakes and a ski lift for the Midwinter Formal, March 8 and 9. The 1st and 2nd Class cadets danced to the music of Affirmative Groove on Friday night, while the 3rd and brand-new 4th Class cadets reveled to the music of Eight Past Midnight on Saturday.—VMI Photos by Apollo Lin '25.



Applications Open for Entrepreneurship Program

By Marianne Hause

A two-year pilot program called the Summer Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Program (SUEP) has launched at VMI as a starting point for entrepreneurship education. It has been established for cadets who possess the mindset of an entrepreneur, regardless of academic major. Through the support from the Jackson-Hope Fund, cadets participating in the program will receive three tuition-free elective credits, with room and board provided at no cost to them.

According to Col. Clifford West, professor in the Department of Economics and Business, SUEP consists of a five-week summer course, field trips to start-up companies and incubators, and interaction with guest speakers chosen from alumni and business leaders. “The vast majority of American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accredited programs are already teaching entrepreneurship, and we should also offer support for our cadets on this front,” he said.

Collaborative partnerships with private and military organizations are an integral part of the initiative. “We have already established partnerships with Shenandoah Community Capital Fund (SCCF), an entrepreneurial support organization in Staunton, and the U.S. Army Research Laboratory in Adelphi, Maryland. We hope these are the first of many partnerships,” stated West.



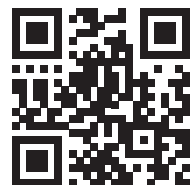
Col. Clifford West introduces Daniel Shear, owner of Seasons' Yield Farm, as a guest speaker for SUEP's Feb. 29 event in Scott Shipp Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Anika Horn, director of Ecosystem Building at SCCF, shared, “SCCF is excited to tap into the creative minds of cadets to tackle real-world problems, while equipping them with an entrepreneurial mindset. Seeing the world through the lens of an entrepreneur and applying lean startup principles to develop and test solutions is a skill that benefits any cadet throughout their career. SCCF looks forward to introducing cadets to local entrepreneurs and giving them a real sense for what it's like to serve their community.”

Brig. Gen. Robert W. Moreschi, dean of the faculty and deputy superintendent for academics, shared that SUEP is an opportunity to

further develop an innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem in support of cadet development and academic opportunity. “Whether in the military or civilian workplace, cadets will be employed in organizations that value innovative thinking and action. Entrepreneurial-minded reasoning, coupled with the honest and honorable character of a cadet, is an unbeatable combination. Members of the Jackson-Hope Board of Overseers, themselves successful business leaders and innovators, understand the benefits of the program and enthusiastically agree to support the initiative. VMI's academic program is grateful for the board's encouragement and financial assistance,” he said.

More details on the program and how to apply can be found at www.vmi.edu/suep.



Daniel Shear, owner of Seasons' Yield Farm, speaks to cadets and Anika Horn of Shenandoah Community Capital Fund about his entrepreneurship experience.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

VMI Hosts 7th Annual Commonwealth Cyber Fusion

By Marianne Hause



The overall winner of the Virginia Cyber Cup Competition is George Mason University.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

The 7th annual Commonwealth Cyber Fusion and Virginia Cyber Cup Competition, a state-wide collegiate cybersecurity competition took place Feb. 23–24. The invitation-only event is for colleges that are National Security Agency (NSA) / Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-designated National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense. It was

organized by the Center for Leadership and Ethics as part of its strategic engagement initiatives, co-hosted with the Virginia Cyber Range and the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative.

VMI founded this cybersecurity event in 2017 at the suggestion of Bryce Bucklin '17, a computer science major, when the Commonwealth of Virginia sought to

create a statewide cybersecurity competition. Sen. Mark Warner serves as honorary chairman.

Participating were about 150 students with 30 of their faculty advisors representing 21 colleges in Virginia: Danville Community College, ECPI, George Mason University, George Washington University, Germanna Community College, James

Madison University, Liberty University, Laurel Ridge Community College, Marymount University, Northern Virginia Community College, Old Dominion University, Radford University, Regent University, Tidewater Community College, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Peninsula Community, Virginia State University, VMI, Virginia Tech, and Virginia Western Community College. Each college was allowed to bring six competing students along with two observer students.

VMI cadet competitors were Reid Cox '24, Daniel Galvez '24, Pierce Harvey '24, Braedyn Rose '24, Michael Poe '25, and Raj Singh '25.

Friday's activities included a keynote speech by Oki Mek, Microsoft chief information security officer for



Participants of the Commonwealth Cyber Fusion and Virginia Cyber Cup Competition talk with job recruiters in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Continued on next page



Pierce Harvey '24 works with his team during the Cyber Cup Competition.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

the Federal Civilian Sector, and a veteran with a 20-year career inside the federal government; a job fair; an employer panel discussion regarding real-world advice for students; and a faculty/industry round table discussion hosted by representatives from the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative. This year's competition included 44 challenges, the most ever for this competition.

The winners of the capture-the-flag-style Virginia Cyber Cup competition for the four-year college division were: George Mason University in first, University of Virginia finishing second, and Virginia Tech in third. For the community college division: Tidewater Community College was the winner, followed by Northern Virginia Community College in second, and Virginia Western Community College in third. George Mason University was the overall winner and received the Commonwealth Cyber Fusion Cup. ✨



Wreath Laid for Daniels

On the morning of March 6, Jonathan M. Daniels '61, an alumnus and clergy member who was an active participant in the civil rights movement, was honored by the commandant and cadet leadership through a ceremony in Memorial Hall. In 1965, Daniels was arrested for participating in a voter rights demonstration in Alabama. Shortly after release from jail, Daniels was killed protecting Ruby Sales, a Black teenager, as she and a friend attempted to buy a soda. When he heard of the tragedy, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "One of the most heroic Christian deeds of which I have heard in my entire ministry was performed by Jonathan Daniels." Daniels is considered a martyr in the Episcopal church.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



TAPS

Capt. Jack Casey '19 died Feb. 7. Casey was one of five Marines involved in a helicopter crash in California during a training flight. They were assigned to the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 361, Marine Aircraft 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

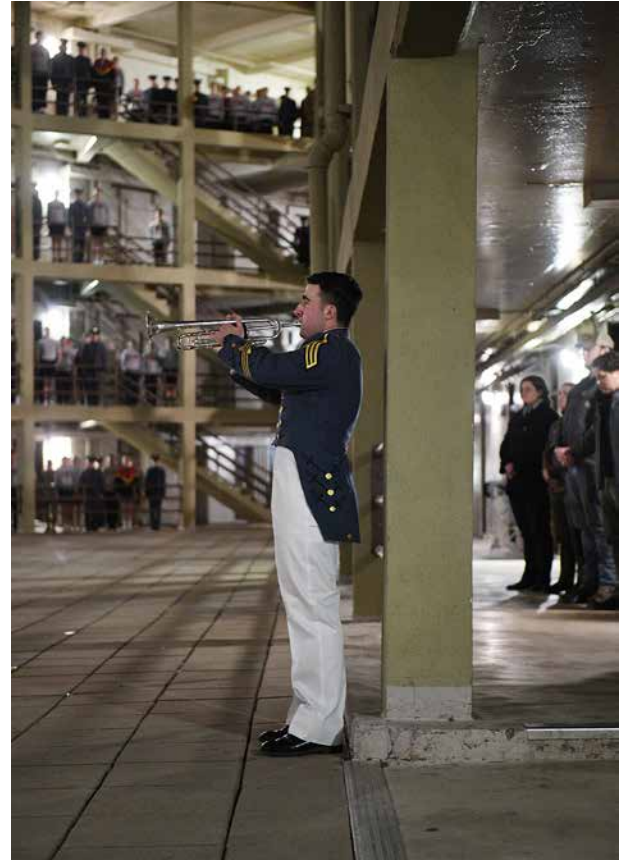
Casey, a physics major, came to VMI from Dover, New Hampshire, and was Company I commander for the 2018–19 academic year.

“It is difficult to find words in the wake of such a jarring loss,” said Capt. Eli Facemire '19, VMI associate chaplain and class president of the VMI Class of 2019. “Jack was absolutely loved by our class, and all our brother rats knew that Jack loved them. He bought in fully to his relationships and opportunities, setting an example of friendship and leadership that was looked up to not only by members of the lower classes, but also by his brother rats.



Capt. Jack Casey '19

His charisma and humility shined through in all he did, and his infectious, fun-loving attitude made him a tremendous joy to simply be around. He made a positive impact on all, and we will cherish



Jacob Patterson '24 plays Taps in New Barracks during a small ceremony for Capt. Jack Casey '19.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.



The Corps of Cadets gathered in barracks Feb. 13 to remember and celebrate the life of Capt. Jack Casey '19. The Regimental and Pipe Bands played Amazing Grace after taps.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.

our memories of him forever. We, as a class, mourn with his loved ones and those brother rats who knew him best. Times like these are when the 'brother rat spirit' that Jack epitomized must be rekindled and embraced.”

“Captain Casey was doing what he had committed to do when he left the Institute, displaying true leadership, courage, and dedication to our country and the Marine Corps,” added Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent. “We are heartbroken for this loss, and I extend my condolences to his brother rats, his family, and those who served beside him.”

Casey was honored during taps in barracks on the evening of Feb. 13, the anniversary of the Class of 2019 Breakout, with the playing of Amazing Grace by the Regimental and Pipe Bands. ❀

Employees Work Together to Get into Shape

By Marianne Hause

When Doug Crabb started working in the Department of Facilities Management last June, he not only started a new career path, but he also began a renovation into becoming a new man.

Crabb formerly worked the night shift for a distribution center in Stuarts Draft, and struggled with the challenges many face who work during the night. His circadian rhythm—the 24-hour internal clock that regulates cycles of alertness and sleepiness by responding to light changes—got out of sync, and prevented him from sleeping thoroughly, eating well, and exercising adequately. As a result, he gained a considerable amount, and weighed 376 pounds when he began at VMI.

Crabb is a family man and father of three boys, ages 8, 10 and 12, who all participate in wrestling and football. Crabb helps coach their teams. “I strongly encourage my sons to stay in shape and work hard to be good athletes, but they started to push back. They would ask me, ‘why should we work out when you don’t?’ And they were right,” he shared. It was his boys’ admonishment that motivated Crabb to want to lose weight and get back into shape.

His new co-workers at VMI introduced him to the athletic facilities available to employees, Cocks Hall and the Corps Physical Training Facility (CPTF). “I get up early and get to Cocks Hall around 5:50 a.m. and work out on the step mill, the elliptical, the treadmill, and the weights for 90 minutes before going to work. Jim Gibson, a VMI wrestling coach, has kids who are good friends with my kids. He knows my goals, and is very encouraging and holds me accountable with my training. He arranges racquet ball and basketball games to get me moving and active in fun ways,”



Doug Crabb and Jacob Hall work out at the CPTF.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

said Crabb. As if a morning workout was not enough, Crabb goes to the CPTF during his lunch break and walks/jogs around the track.

Cmdr. Charles H. Barber III, director of professional training facilities at VMI, witnesses Crabb’s daily workouts. “Doug has dedicated himself to a successful fitness regime. It is satisfying to note Doug’s personal success—100% on him,” said Barber.

In addition to working out, Crabb has made changes to his diet by cutting back on processed sugar and eating smaller portions. Since June, he has lost over 80 pounds. His goal is to lose 80 more.

Crabb has inspired co-worker, Jacob Hall, to also get in shape. Hall had been wanting to lose weight for years, but lacked motivation. “Last summer my doctor had

suggested I lose 20 pounds, and gave me a year to do it,” said Hall. Around that same time, Hall started a second job that was more physically demanding. “Last July I went with Doug to Cocks Hall to work out, and while I was there, I weighed myself and realized I had already lost the 20 pounds—in just a month and a half!” That weight loss was the incentive he needed. Hall has lost 40 pounds since July and his goal is to lose another 40. Each morning, he works out at the CPTF, and again with Crabb at lunch.

Crabb’s upbeat outlook and drive has not gone unnoticed in his department. Eric Schwartz ’95, deputy director of facilities management, stated, “Despite only being with us a few short months, Doug has brought many ideas and positive influences to our department. This is just one example of what he has brought to the team.”

Similar to VMI’s motto of, “No ordinary college,” Crabb and Hall share a mantra to maintain their determination, “Because easy doesn’t change you.” ❀



Doug Crabb displays his dramatic weight loss in before and after photos.—Photos courtesy of Doug Crabb.

Courage for Black History Month continued from page 5

Rivers family. Interviewed afterward, he spoke of the bond between soldiers, and for him, color never entered into the equation. “You have to understand, in battle, you fight for each other.”

John Fox was accepted into The Ohio State University, but he decided to transfer out to Wilberforce University, because it was one of only three historically Black colleges in the country that offered ROTC training, and Fox was set on a career in the military. Upon graduation in 1941, Fox joined the newly activated all Black 366th Infantry Regiment, and became commander of his company. The 366th embarked for the Italian theater in late March 1944, becoming part of the 92nd division. With a forward post in Tuscany needing to be manned over the Christmas holiday, Fox volunteered for the extended four-day posting. It was a lonely assignment on the top floor of a 46-foot medieval stone church bell tower, and his final assignment of the war. The day after Christmas, German mortar struck the bell tower just 50 feet from Fox’s location. A heavy German artillery barrage followed immediately after this first strike. Fox ordered the two men with him to retreat down the tower, while he stayed and made a life changing decision. He communicated over the phone

to give coordinates of the town, and instructed his men to fire high explosives, followed by a smoke round, so any of them remaining in the town, could escape. Later, Fox gave his own position, but his men refused to fire on him. Instead, they transferred the call to have Fox’s shocking request approved by a general. Approval was granted within minutes, but before Fox’s coordinates were entered, Fox was asked one last time if he was sure about his request. Fox yelled in the phone, “Yes, damn it! There are more of them than there of us. Give ‘em hell.” The shell was fired, and Fox was killed.

Child started his career in television in Boston before moving to New York as a freelance technical director. He began producing independent projects, including the film, “Gettysburg, The Boys in Blue and Gray,” and won over 26 writing and directing awards. He collaborated with well-known figures such as Hal Holbrook, Walter Cronkite, and Andy Rooney. He was awarded Honorary Crew Membership aboard the USS Franklin for directing and co-writing the film, “USS Franklin: Honor Restored.” His book, “Immortal Valor: The Black Medal of Honor Winners of World War II,” may be purchased on Amazon.com. ✪



Women Faculty Gather for Spring Luncheon

On Wednesday, March 6 members of faculty gathered in Moody Hall for the Spring Luncheon sponsored by Brig. Gen. Robert Moreschi and the Women’s Faculty Working Group. Attendees heard remarks from guest speakers including Washington and Lee University professor, Ellen Mayock as well as Lynée Lewis Gaillet, Georgia State University professor. Both addressed the theme, “We Are Not Alone: Empowering Women in Academe.” After lunch, retired Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham moderated a question-and-answer session with the guest speakers. Since fall 2022, members of the Women’s Faculty Working Group served their ongoing mission to foster an environment of excellence for women faculty at VMI by identifying challenges to their success, offering recommendations as needed to address such challenges, proposing opportunities for professional development, and promoting the achievements of women faculty. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Joint Public Safety Training

A mock DUI event was conducted March 7 in front of Third Barracks. Members of VMI Emergency Management Service (EMS), firefighting club, VMI police, along with the Lexington Fire Department (LFD), and Rockbridge County Fire-Rescue performed the training drill meant to make cadets more aware of the dangers of drinking and driving before the Midwinter Formal. The exercise showed cadets how fire and EMS agencies handle a motor vehicle accident involving multiple victims and multiple vehicles. Members of the LFD and the firefighting club conducted extrication of victims and established a landing zone for Life-Guard helicopter on the Parade Ground. Simultaneously, members of LFD and VMI EMS conducted patient stabilization procedures on victims and established a triage site. VMI police arrested the impaired driver.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Trivia Answers from Page 12

1. \$22 million
2. \$200,000
3. Mechanical engineering
4. Pressing shop
5. Skis and ski poles sticking up out of the snow



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Band Competition

VMI hosted the 46th Military School Band and Choir Festival, Friday, Feb. 16 through Sunday, Feb. 18. It featured a concert band and a festival choir composed of military high school and college cadets, and a clinic for military high school and college drum majors. Col. John A. Brodie, music director at VMI, served as a conductor of the festival concert band. A full member concert was held in Gillis Theater.

The Military School Band and Choir Festival was founded in 1968. Growing from its roots as a festival attended only by bandsmen from military schools in Virginia, the Military School Band and Choir Festival has grown into a national event, drawing more than 100 students from schools and colleges across the United States.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.

