

— NEWSLETTER —

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Friends' Website Salutes the 100th Anniversary of Two Airpower Milestones

“Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur.” *The Command of the Air*, 1921, Douhet.

“She is gone!” Shouted by Captain St. Clair (Bill) Streett from the back seat of Brigadier General Billy Mitchell’s DH-4B on July 21, 1921. Streett had watched the battleship *Ostfriesland* sink rapidly after being hit by bombs from Mitchell’s First Provisional Air Brigade. *Winged Defense*, 1925, Mitchell.



Giulio Douhet

In 2021, The Friends’ website features Giulio Douhet and Billy Mitchell, two visionaries who in 1921 foresaw the strategic potential of airpower. Both were outspoken, abrasive, and ahead of their time, and both were court-martialed. Yet both eventually made their case, in Europe and America, for the war-winning power of an independent air force.

Academy grads may recognize the above Douhet quotation from its appearance in *Contrails*, a book of knowledge for incoming cadets. Thousands of doolies have memorized and recited that quotation, though perhaps knowing little about either Douhet or the “changes in the character of war” he had in mind. His vision was a powerful air force that

“should at all times cooperate with the army and the navy, but it must be independent of them both.”

Cadets and others wishing to know more about Douhet will find a signed 1921 edition of *The Command of the Air* in Clark Special Collections in the McDermott Library. They can use a link on The Friends’ website to download *The Command of the Air* from the Air University.

Cadets dining daily in Mitchell Hall are, of course, more familiar with Billy Mitchell than with Giulio Douhet. They know something of Mitchell’s court-martial, his reputation as the “Father of the Air Force,” and his sinking of the *Ostfriesland* during bombing tests conducted by the Navy and Air Service in summer 1921.

At the time of the *Ostfriesland* sinking, test officials



Billy Mitchell

bitterly complained that Mitchell violated rules of the tests by dropping more and heavier bombs (2,000 pounds) than the Navy and Air Service had agreed. The officials were furious, but films of the event made it indisputable that Mitchell was right—airplanes could sink battleships. The Friends’ website provides a link to YouTube for one of those documentary films showing the sinking of the *Ostfriesland*.

More information about Billy Mitchell is available in the Mitchell Collection of Clark Special Collections in the McDermott Library, and in his book, *Winged Defense* (1925), containing his articles and testimony before Congress.

We Will Miss Them!

Lori Bennett (1919-2020) was an original Board member of The Friends of The Academy Library. She married John “Jack” Bennett before World War II. A B-17 pilot, he was shot down, captured, and sent to Stalag Luft III, where he became a friend of Lt Col A. P. Clark, the 6th USAFA Superintendent, a Founder and later President of The Friends. Jack and Lori settled in Colorado Springs, and Lori became active in many organizations. Although she described herself as the “token” woman on the original Friends board, she was much more than that. She was a donor of Stalag Luft III materials to Special Collections, an organizer of Stalag Luft III reunions in the 1980s and 1990s, and in 2013 came to Special Collections during the Stalag Luft III reunion to describe how her Jack had made compasses using melted phonograph records. Lori was The

Friends’ last link from the WWII era and will be missed.

Colonel Andi Biancur (1938-2021) was the son of an Air Force pilot and the proud President of the USAFA Class of 1960. His early years in the AF were marked by multiple combat tours in Southeast Asia. Andi was the first graduate to “fire a shot in anger” during an A-26 mission in South Vietnam in 1963. Quickly identified for his extraordinary talents and energy, he alternated between flying and staff assignments and played a central role in US Presidential travel during the 1960s. Andi also left valuable and enduring marks, especially as an International Arms Negotiator and later as a Program Manager for multimillion-dollar AF weapon systems. Andi’s retirement from the Air Force did little to diminish his drive and determination to contribute. Always a pilot at heart, he helped

lead several aviation organizations, including the Order of Daedalians and the Quiet Birdmen. Deeply passionate about the Air Force Academy and its mission, he volunteered repeatedly for the hardest and most meaningful jobs at the Association of Graduates. Andi filled a void The Friends did not know we had when he joined our Board and Executive Committee in May 2010. He always asked the tough question, spoke his mind, volunteered for the hard jobs, gave 100 percent support regardless of his view, and provided sound counsel when advice was needed. Andi’s unflagging efforts to memorialize his fellow USAFA graduates in our five graduate databases will remain a permanent institutional resource. The Friends, the Academy, the Air Force, the community, and the nation are the richer for his having passed our way. ‘Blue skies and fair winds!’

Friends’ Independent Contractors Working in the Library

The Friends presently have three independent contractors working in the Clark Special Collections Branch. Our lead archivist, Mr. Christopher Schreck, has an MS in History from the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (UCCS) and is fully accredited by the Academy of Certified Archivists. Chris’s principal work this past year has been organizing and processing donated collections. In the absence of a government archivist, he has taken the lead to completely review the status of all donated collections of historic documents, uncovering some 300 collections that had not been

completely processed. His inventory report serves as the basis to prioritize the work to be done. Additionally, he wrote the Library’s first comprehensive Collections Processing Guidelines, establishing standard procedures for handling and preserving materials. Ms. Tawnie Mizer works in the Library as a collections digital archivist. Tawnie has an MS in Library and Information Science from Emporia State University. Her main tasks have been developing descriptive finding aids for manuscript collections and updating the Library’s on-line database to provide better access

to materials by cadets, faculty, and other researchers. Mr. Aaron R. Wilson has just joined us as a multimedia processing archivist. Aaron is a candidate for an MS in History at UCCS. His initial work is to continue efforts to catalog all the Special Collections audio-visual assets, creating and enhancing digital access to materials in line with current archival standards. A key element of his work is to identify multimedia material needing urgent preservation measures and help the Library prioritize preservation work based on the materials, their condition, and their historical significance.



*Left to Right:
Aaron Wilson, Tawnie Mizer
and Chris Schrek*

President's Message

The past year has challenged The Friends as it has everyone. However, with your continued support your Board and Executive Committee met that challenge and sustained our support of the McDermott Library. The Board fulfilled its annual duties through email, and the Executive Committee never missed a beat with highly productive virtual monthly meetings. A special thanks to the members of the ExCom for their adaptability and commitment as we carried on.

Independent contractors Tawny Mizer and Chris Schreck continued processing and improving access to many collections of historical significance. With the recent addition of a new contractor, Aaron Wilson, we maintain our focus on preserving and improving access to the multimedia collections. All multimedia items have been moved to a dedicated, temperature-controlled room and shelved. The next steps are detailed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Steck Collection

Late in 2020, The Friends was pleased to be able to assist with the donation of unique Stalag Luft III materials from Mrs. Ulana Steck of Toronto, Canada, namely *The Wartime Log of Walter (Wally) Steck*. Lt. Walter Steck (Ulana's late husband) was a POW in Stalag Luft III, 1944–1945. In the camp he was the leader of the band "The Flying

The Friends' Oral History Project was completed in February 2020. Over two-and-a-half years, 224 oral history interviews from the Academy's Center of Oral History and Department of History were transcribed, edited, and abstracted. Carolyn Lemp, a Library volunteer, and wife of Executive Committee member, Richard, finished the remaining work to deliver this significant addition to the Clark Special Collections Branch. While COVID-19 restrictions often denied us access to the McDermott Library, our folks worked from home with virtually no disruptions. For example, they received and processed valuable donations to the Stalag Luft III (see article below) and General "Hap" Arnold collections.

The Friends suffered two notable losses this past year. Board members Lori Bennett passed away last June and Andi Biancur this past January. Both were Board members for many years, and Andi was the force behind our database work and a valued member of the Executive Committee (please see

Syncopators," and together with others, put on several shows for the prisoners. The collection includes some 40 pages of drawings, original poems/songs, and illustrated showbills. This collection provides a valuable and unusual insight into the prisoners' lives as POWs and is a wonderful addition to the Academy's collection of Stalag Luft III memorabilia.

Website Traffic Continues to Grow

In 2020 website traffic grew significantly, with the number of pages visited increasing by a multiple of 7.6 from 2019 to a total of nearly 1.4 million in 2020.

During the first quarter of 2021 visits numbered only slightly higher than corresponding numbers from the

first quarter of 2020. But total "pages visited" again showed significant growth of more than 40 percent.

Visitors during the first quarter came from around the world, with highest numbers of pages viewed by visitors from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and France.

the dedicated article in this Newsletter).

Looking ahead, The Friends anticipate holding our annual luncheon this fall. The Executive Committee felt with the COVID-19 situation it was too early to hold the luncheon in the spring as is our custom. Our independent contractors' work in Special Collections will continue. As an earlier article explains, we have an excellent team and anticipate great progress. We are also seeking someone to replace Andi Biancur as the volunteer keeper of our databases. Andi oversaw an upgrade to the databases two years ago that made working with them much easier. If you are interested in becoming involved in this effort at any level, please contact me. With your continued support, The Friends look forward to increasing the McDermott Library's capabilities for original source research and greatly improving cadet, faculty, and researcher digital access to the wonderful collections. If you have items to contribute, please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance.



Visit our website:
friends.usafalibrary.com

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Update From the McDermott Library's Director by Ms. Diane Klare

Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the library has made significant progress since summer 2020 on re-envisioning library services and responsibilities to support cadets, faculty, and researchers.

Since fall 2020, the library has expanded online services to better assist faculty and cadets regardless of class format (online or in person). The library has implemented self-checkout of books, installed a system for cadets and faculty to remotely access online resources more easily, and introduced research appointments using video conferencing. These tools have enabled everyone to maintain social distancing while still allowing the USAFA community to take advantage of the many resources the library has to offer. The library plans to continue many of these services after the pandemic situation eases. To further support the USAFA community, the library returned to full operating hours beginning in the fall 2020 semester, one of the few academic libraries in Colorado to do so. This was made possible by limiting onsite staff using rotational scheduling and installing LOTS of Plexiglass.

Amidst the pandemic, we bid farewell to Dr. Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Chief of Special Collections, who retired in August 2020. Her expertise, knowledge, and sense of humor are sorely missed. The library is actively searching for her successor and hopes to have that individual onboard in early fall 2021. Concurrent with that search is another one to bring in a librarian who will focus on contemporary scholarly communications and support the humanities. More recently, the library hired a librarian who will focus on evaluating and improving services, spaces, and circulating collections to best meet user needs and support STEM. These latter two positions will work closely with the new Chief of Special Collections to highlight the Clark Special Collections abilities to support USAFA classes in multiple disciplines.

Without a doubt, these changes are numerous, but they are designed to benefit current library users as well as increase support to alumni and other scholarly researchers as the library returns to more normal operations.

The Bolinger Collection by Chris Schreck

The Bolinger Collection is a marvelous resource on World War II escape and evasion. It contains material on airmen who escaped enemy capture in Europe, the families who harbored them at great personal risk, and the sophisticated underground networks that developed amid war and German occupation across Belgium, the Netherlands, and France.

Bruce Bolinger was the son of Belgian refugees who fled their homeland for England following the outbreak of World War I, and later emigrated to the United States. Mr. Bolinger, fascinated by his family's heritage, toured Belgium and the Netherlands in 1975. He met his great-uncle Arthur, a Dutch national who helped rescue Allied airmen, Jews, and members of the Dutch resistance movement during World War II. Upon his retirement in 1998, Mr. Bolinger decided to explore his great-uncle's activities in greater depth, uncovering a wealth of information regarding WWII escape and evasion in the process. The material Mr. Bolinger collected over the following twenty years included interviews with airmen and members of various resistance organizations, personal papers, legal documents, correspondence, and much more.

The Library received Mr. Bolinger's entire collection of research materials (over 112 boxes of documents) in January 2020. The Friends spent the following months preserving and cataloging this important historical resource. The Bolinger collection can be found within Clark Special Collections at the McDermott Library.

In these uncertain times of Covid-19 virus, any new information concerning the date and time of the annual luncheon will be posted on our website:

www.friends.usafalibrary.com