

by James R. Dempsey, 13057



the creation of

# CONSTITUTION CORNER

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift  
of the Class of January 1943

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY ★ WEST POINT, NEW YORK



**CONSTITUTION CORNER** is a special place, located on the outside of the southeast corner of the wall surrounding the Superintendent's Garden, near the MacArthur Monument. It is a monument recognizing the relationship between our Constitution and our professional soldiers, as well as the three branches of government. It is a memorial to the 76 members of the USMA Class of January 1943 who died in combat or on military duty, while supporting and defending the Constitution. It is a rendezvous point for cadets and their families or guests, since it is situated just outside the north sallyport of North Barracks. Here is the story of how it came to be, and why it looks as it does.

### **PREPARATIONS**

In 1988, the 45th anniversary of the Class of January '43, the class began discussions about our 50th anniversary gift to West Point, a customary last hurrah for West Point classes. There were no guidelines at that time from USMA or the AOG. That year, two of our classmates, Frank Camm<sup>1</sup> and Jim Frankosky<sup>2</sup>, were trustees of the AOG. At one of the AOG meetings that year, the Superintendent<sup>3</sup> distributed a draft list of projects which he recommended be established as those of greatest need by the Academy and asked that the AOG review and approve the list for consideration of classes considering their 50th anniversary gift. 1988 was the bicentennial year of our Constitution, and one of the suggestions, an idea of Dave Palmer's, was a small park commemorating the Constitution, to be located in the outside corner of the Superintendent's garden wall.

Jim Frankosky and Frank Camm were intrigued by this project and discussed it at the next class luncheon. Frankosky wrote a letter to the Supe indicating the interest of our class in this project and noted that we had begun a fund-raising campaign, under the direction of Bill Knowlton<sup>4</sup>, to provide funding.

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<sup>1</sup> LTG Frank A. Camm (USA, Ret.) 13053, Trustee Emeritus, Association of Graduates.

<sup>2</sup> MG James O. Frankosky (USAF, Ret.), 13064.

<sup>3</sup> LTG Dave R. Palmer, 20671, USMA Superintendent, 1986–1991.

<sup>4</sup> GEN William A. Knowlton (USA, Ret.), 13044, the 49th Supe.

The AOG formally approved the list of projects in 1989, and Joe Benson<sup>5</sup> wrote a letter to Dave Palmer asking for approval of Constitution Park as the 50th anniversary gift of the Class of January 1943. The request was approved, and the project got underway.

## THE PLAQUES

The class established a 50th Anniversary Gift Committee, consisting of Chairman Frank Camm, Jim Frankosky, and Dee Armstrong<sup>6</sup>. The committee quickly decided on the major elements of the project. The circular portion of the brick wall on the southeast corner consisted of five panels, separated by brick columns, so the committee planned five bronze plaques that would describe the relationship between the Constitution, the Army, and the United States Military Academy. There would be a flagstone-paved area with five marble benches for resting and contemplation. In the center of the paved area, there would be a granite boulder from Stony Lonesome, to give some visual depth to the project.

Dave Palmer appointed COL Hunt, law professor at the time, as review authority for the project. The initial plan for the five plaques were:

1. Cadet Oath
2. Officer Oath
3. Preamble of the Constitution
4. Selections from the Constitution
5. Quotations about the Constitution

COL Hunt readily agreed with the first four, but rejected the fifth, which included quotations about the Constitution from the Founding Fathers. He suggested other quotes. The committee then proposed listing prominent deceased American generals who exemplified “Duty Honor Country.” He rejected some and substituted names of several living generals. We thought this was inappropriate and looked elsewhere. Frank Camm suggested a plaque addressing the unique relationship of our military to the Constitution, to be titled “Loyalty to the Constitution.” Dee Armstrong, number one in English in our class, drafted the words for the plaque, which were approved by the Law Department, the

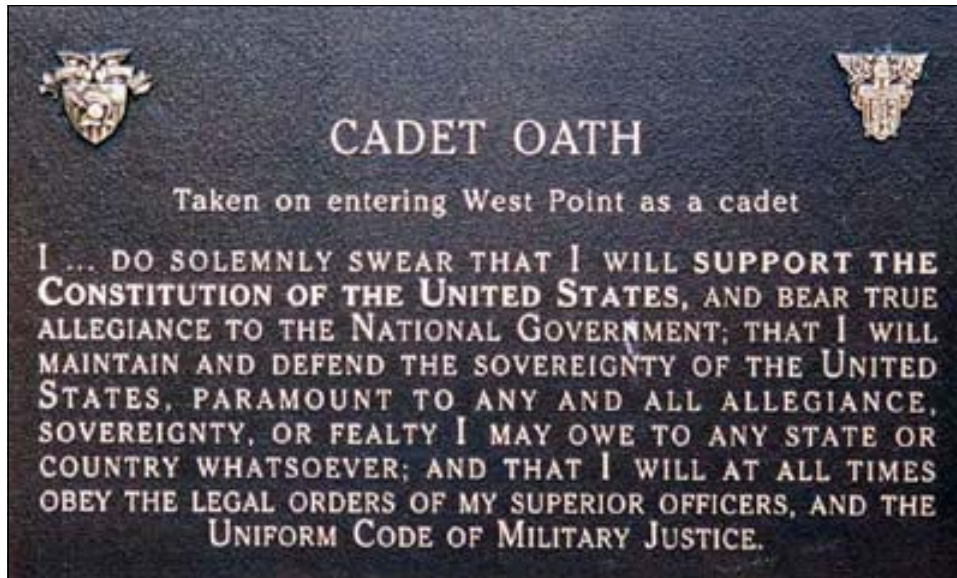
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<sup>5</sup> COL Joseph W. Benson (USA, Ret.), 13210, class president at the time.

<sup>6</sup> BG DeWitt C. Armstrong III (USA, Ret.), 13046.

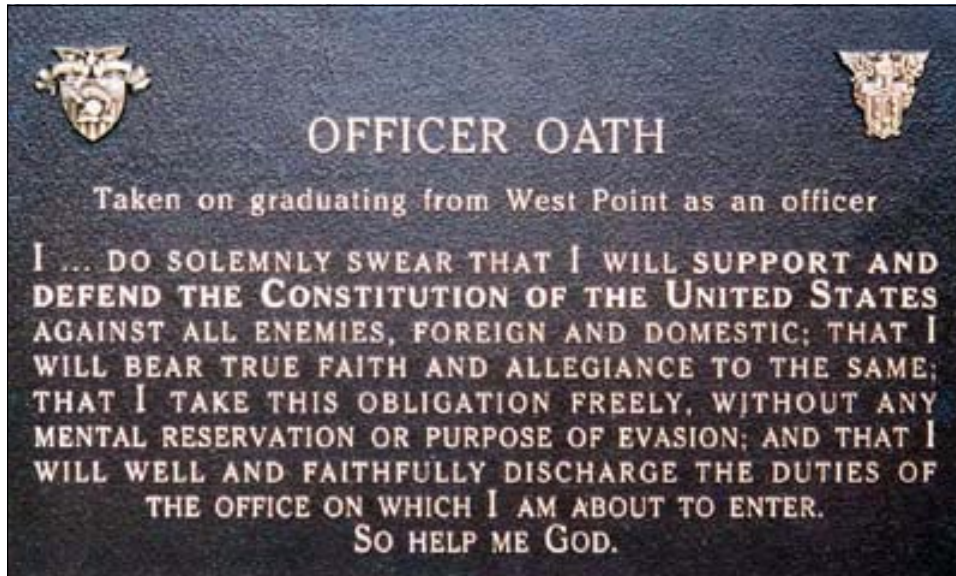
English Department, and the Superintendent. So the fifth plaque became “Loyalty to the Constitution.”

The final plaques were cast in bronze and mounted on the wall by Douglas Logan, George A. Logan & Sons, Cold Spring, New York. The five plaques are in the proportion of the Golden Rectangle, from ancient Greek architecture. Plaques one and two are 38" x 24"; plaques three, four, and five are 48" x 30".



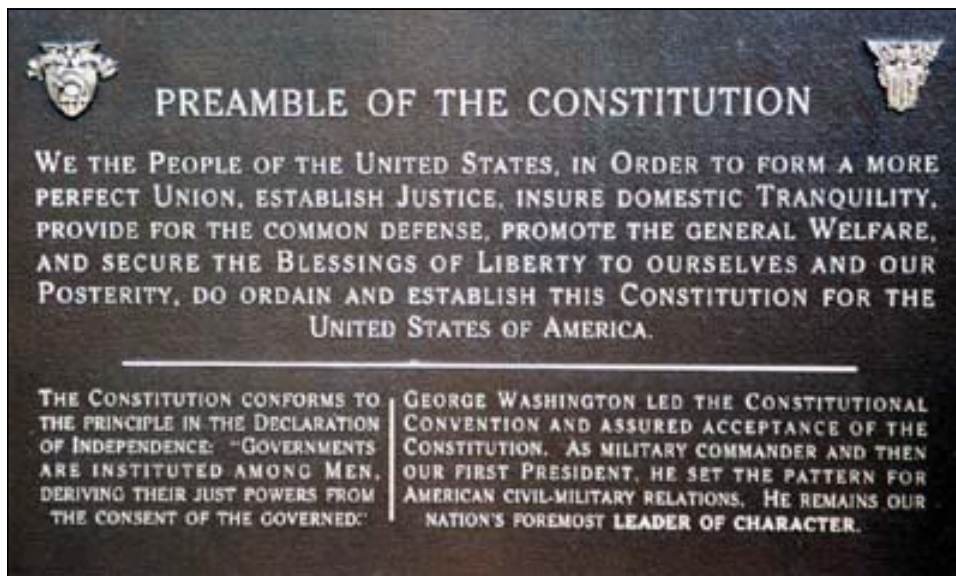
PLAQUE ONE: **Cadet Oath.**

Because cadets are not yet in the Army, they are not required to defend the Constitution, but only to support it. The remainder of the cadet oath seems designed to prevent a recurrence of Civil War history, when in 55 of 60 major battles, both sides were commanded by West Point graduates. The cadet oath was last changed by Act of Congress in August 1861.



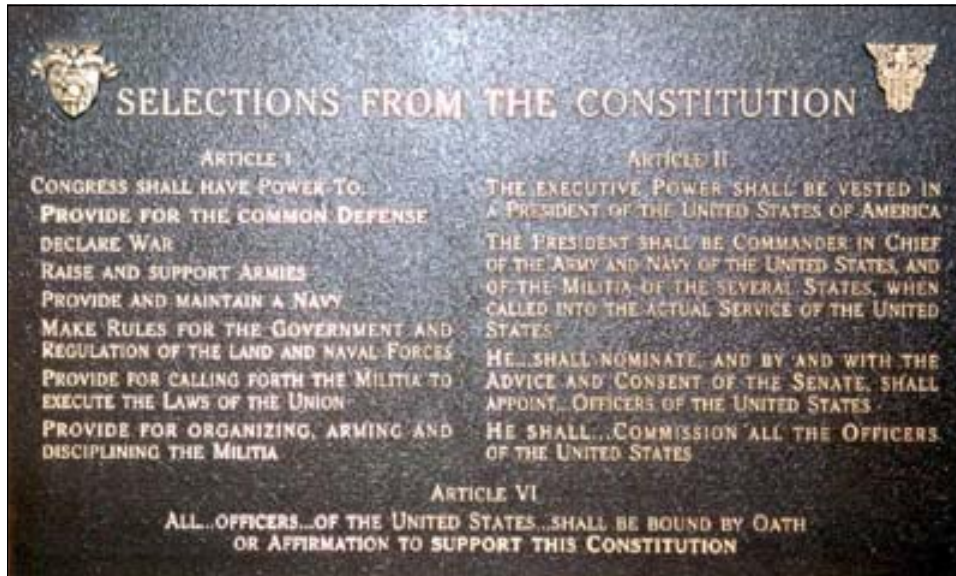
PLAQUETWO: **Officer Oath.**

The officer oath requires swearing to support and defend the Constitution, not allegiance to any person or office. The officer is therefore bound in his conduct by the terms of the Constitution.



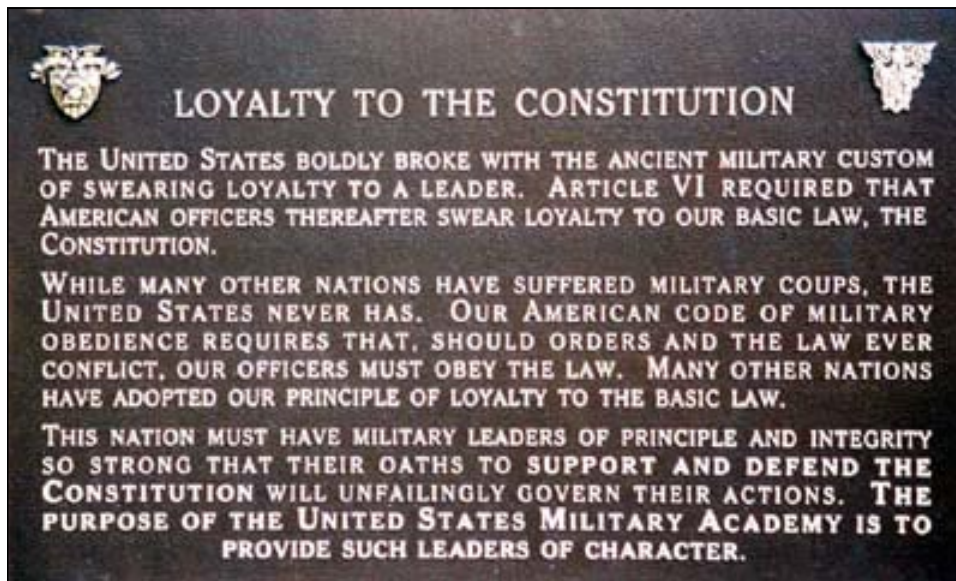
PLAQUETHREE: **Preamble of the Constitution.**

The Constitution establishes the government of the United States as a Federal Republic form of democracy. The preamble of the Constitution declares the intent of the people to provide for the common defense.



PLAQUE FOUR: Selections from the Constitution.

Articles I and II state the authority and responsibility of the legislative (Congress) and executive (the President) branches of government to provide for the common defense. Article VI requires all officers of the United States to swear to defend the Constitution.



PLAQUE FIVE: Loyalty to the Constitution.

## THE CAPSTONE

On top of the brick wall on which the five plaques are mounted is a granite capstone in two sections, separated by a brick column. The following words are carved in the capstones, in three-inch letters:

### SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

These words are taken from the Officer Oath, which all cadets commissioned at graduation are required to swear.

### USMA PURPOSE: TO PROVIDE THE NATION WITH LEADERS OF CHARACTER WHO SERVE THE COMMON DEFENSE

These words are from the USMA Statement of Purpose as it existed in 1991. The current USMA mission statement includes a paraphrased version, “commissioned leader of character committed to . . . a lifetime of selfless service to the nation.”

What do we mean by “character”? We mean having the common sense to know the difference between right and wrong and the courage to choose the right.

What do we mean by “right”? A few simple, profound truths:

*Duty, Honor, Country*

*The Honor Code*

*The Golden Rule*

*Do what you said you would do*

*Always do your best*

*Lead by example*

## THE BOULDER

The boulder in the center of the flagstone paving was originally planned to add architectural depth to the park so it would look like a place and not just some plaques on a wall. Frank Camm and his wife Arlene found the boulder at Stony Lonesome, Frank driving and Arlene looking. When she saw a boulder that looked like a candidate, they would stop and Frank would evaluate whether the boulder could be retrieved with machinery available on the post. So Arlene chose the boulder, representing the distaff side of the class. All of us who have reached 50 or more years of marriage understand and are grateful for the contribution our wives have made to our careers, happiness, and well-being.



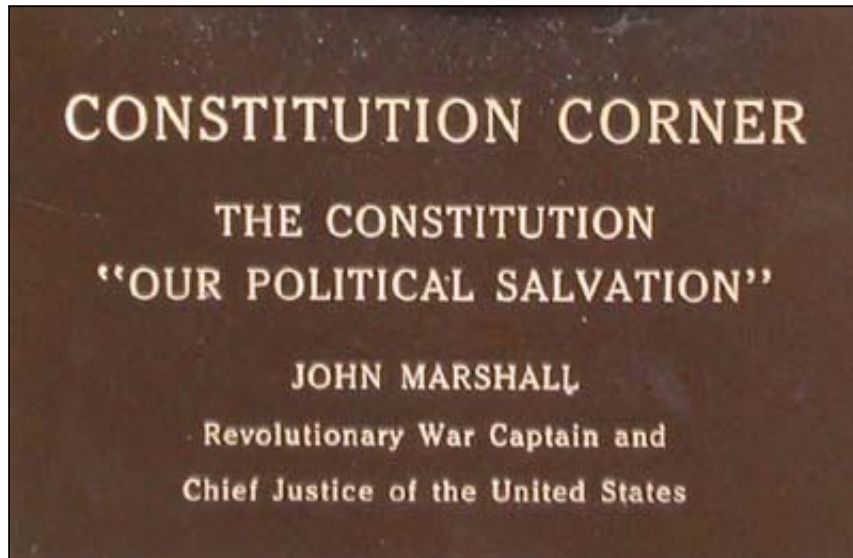
Arlene & Frank  
Camm.

These elements of the project were completed by the spring of 1991, including the marble benches and the flagstone paving. By agreement with USMA, the class celebrated the completion of the project with a ceremony on 20 May 1991 attended by then Superintendent Dave Palmer, who had initiated the idea and been very helpful in getting the required approvals. Class president Jim Dempsey<sup>7</sup>, Frank Camm, and Jim Frankosky represented the class in presenting Constitution Corner to the Academy.

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<sup>7</sup> James R. Dempsey, 13057, class president, 1990–1993, 1998–2003.

The name “Constitution Park” had been used initially, but, as the project began to take shape, “Constitution Corner” seemed more appropriate. In the spring of 1991, as the work neared completion, the new name was recommended to Dave Palmer, who approved, so Constitution Corner it is, and the plaque was added to the boulder for the presentation ceremony.



PLAQUE SIX: **Constitution Corner.**

This plaque provided a convenient place to include the judiciary, the third branch of government. Chief Justice John Marshall was the sixth chief justice, for a term of 31 years. The decisions of the Marshall court largely defined and established the Supreme Court as the interpreter and arbiter of the Constitution.

Although the original reason for the boulder was to add architectural depth to the Corner, many of us have come to think of the boulder as a symbol of the permanence of the Constitution and West Point. The boulder was deposited at Stony Lonesome some 10,000 years ago, part of the terminal moraine of the last ice age. We moved it a few miles to the Plain, which has been a part of USMA for a mere two hundred years. We see a duty to ensure that the Constitution and West Point are here for a few hundred more years.



James Dempsey  
and Frank  
Camm.

The above photograph was taken in April 2002, the Bicentennial Year, on the occasion of a visit to West Point for two purposes. The first was to attend the burial service for Dee Armstrong, our classmate whose contributions to Constitution Corner have been described herein. The second was to attend the dedication of the Tronsrue Indoor Marksmanship Center, toward which our class had made a significant contribution. Dee was on the rifle team during our cadet years.

### **CLASS TREE**

The class tree of the Class of 1941 was in the middle of Constitution Corner, and we hoped an arrangement could be made to substitute our class plaque on the tree. With the help of Gus Fishburne<sup>8</sup>, Director of Alumni Affairs, a suitable tree was found and the Class of 1941 graciously agreed to move their plaque to the new tree. The tree in Constitution Corner now bears our class plaque.

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<sup>8</sup> Elliott G. Fishburne III, LTC (USA, Ret.), 24046, Director of Alumni Affairs, USMA.



## DEDICATION

The class, at its 50th Reunion, on 24 May 1993, dedicated Constitution Corner to the 76 classmates who died in combat or while on military duty and marked the occasion by installing Plaque Seven on the brick post to the left of the five constitutional plaques. The plaque reads: “They supported and defended the Constitution as, here on this plain, we together swore to do.”

Classmates killed doing their sworn duty numbered two cadets and 74 of 409 graduates. The chronological listing on the plaque of their names, units, and place of death shows vividly the size and range of contributions of an illustrative West Point class.

During World War II, 44 of our classmates were killed in combat and 13 in training accidents, 12 of which were in the air. Another 16 were killed later in air accidents, and three more in the Korean War. Killed in combat were 18 infantrymen, 10 fighter pilots, 10 bomber pilots, three armor officers, three engineers, two field artillerymen, and one reconnaissance pilot. The complete list is at Appendix I.

PLAQUE SEVEN: *Dedication.*



Classmates, wives, and widows at the dedication, 24 May 1993.

At the dedication, Howard Graves<sup>9</sup> told of the visit of the premier of Tajikistan, one of the states formerly part of the Soviet Union. The premier asked him about relations between the civilian leaders and the military in a democracy. They walked from the Supe's quarters to Constitution Corner, where the premier spent an hour poring over the words on our plaques and digesting their significance. ★

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<sup>9</sup> LTG Howard D. Graves (USA Ret.), 23283, Superintendent, USMA, 1991–1996.

## APPENDIX I: DEDICATION PLAQUE TEXT

THE USMA CLASS OF JANUARY 1943 DEDICATES THIS  
 CONSTITUTION CORNER  
 TO OUR CLASSMATES WHO DIED  
 IN COMBAT (SHOWN BY \*) OR IN MILITARY ACCIDENTS.  
 THEY SUPPORTED AND DEFENDED THE CONSTITUTION  
 AS, HERE ON THIS PLAIN, WE TOGETHER SWORE TO DO.  
 2 CADETS AND 74 OF OUR 409 GRADUATES  
 DIED IN THE SEQUENCE BELOW:

	<b>1942</b>	
CDT GM MacMullin	AT-6	Georgia
CDT JM Kirk	P-39	Georgia
	<b>1943</b>	
LT CK Sellers	P-38	California
LT FA Thomas	B-26	Texas
LT JF Phelan	AT-6	California
LT RC Zettel	P-47	Virginia
LT JK Hocker	B-17	East Texas
LT B Norris	P-47	Rhode Island
LT WB Wilson	AT-17	Texas
LT MS Wardrop	B-26	Kentucky
	<b>1944</b>	
LT HA Jarrell*	B-17	Germany
LT GW Dixon*	B-25	New Guinea
LT RM Combs*	Infantry	Solomon Islands
LT JK Eckert*	B-26	England
CPT HL Lambert*	P-51	English Channel
CPT BB Skaggs*	B-24	Germany
LT MA Neumann	Engineers	New Guinea
CPT MA Smith*	P-47	Normandy
CPT JE Bush*	P-40	China
LT JF Reynolds*	B-26	Normandy
LT TM Chambliss*	Infantry	Normandy
LT GM Eberle*	Infantry	Normandy
CPT CF Gee*	P-47	Normandy
LT KE Canella*	P-38	Normandy
CPT RB Tresville*	P-47	Gulf of Genoa
LT JW Freeman*	Infantry	Normandy
LT DE Hall*	Cavalry	France
LT JR Northrop*	P-38	Normandy
LT CR Finley*	Infantry	Normandy
LT RWD Guthrie*	Infantry	France
LT HJ Fiander*	Infantry	France
LT WA Kerr	P-47	Louisiana
MAJ HR Stroh*	P-47	France
LT BW Mills*	Infantry	Belgium
CPT JF Clark	B-29	New Mexico
MAJ WH Tallant*	B-24	Germany
LT WL Clemenson	Cavalry	Germany
CPT RB Jones*	Artillery	France
CPT WW Pratt*	Engineers	Holland
LT JEH Rumbough*	Infantry	Philippines
LT WB Brice*	Infantry	Germany
CPT CC Benedict*	B-29	China
CPT DM Stangle*	B-26	Germany
CPT HF Crain*	Infantry	English Channel
CPT FS Kremer*	Infantry	Luxembourg

CPT RP Harris*	1945	Philippines
CPT JD Wright*	P-47	Belgium
CPT TH Martin*	Infantry	France
CPT PW Wheeler*	Engineers	Philippines
LT HA Saunders*	Infantry	Germany
MAJ EC Suor*	Infantry	Philippines
CPT JH Featherston*	A-20	Germany
LT FO Tobey*	Artillery	Japan
CPT WH Scott*	B-29	Germany
CPT VV Taylor*	Infantry	Germany
LT NL Davis*	Armor	Germany
CPT EC Lacy*	Infantry	Philippines
MAJ EH Brooks	Engineers	Germany
LTC FH Bonham	B-17	Belgium
	C-45	Florida
	<b>1946–1949</b>	
MAJ JE Hatch	P-38	Germany
LT WH Tucker	A-26	Japan
CPT ED Scott	C-45	Michigan
MAJ JC Catlin	T-6	New York
MAJ HG Kolb	P-51	Colorado
CPT JM Little	P-80	Arkansas
CPT RH Fautt	P-47	Jamaica
MAJ FE Boyd	C-47	Illinois
CPT CC Pinkerton	P-51	Ohio
	<b>1950–1962</b>	
MAJ DH Bruner	B-25	Illinois
MAJ B Seegers*	Infantry	Korea
LTC JA Rippin*	T-33	Korea
LTC MC Carmack	B-50	Coast of Spain
LTC RC Brittingham	B-25	Maryland
LTC JE Roberts*	B-26	North Korea
LTC AL Lane	T-33	Illinois
COL KA Berry	T-39	Washington

**WE HONOR HERE AS WELL NONGRADUATED CLASSMATES  
WHO ALSO LOST THEIR LIVES IN MILITARY SERVICE**

## DUTY HONOR COUNTRY

