SCRIPT

Hubert R. Harmon and the Air Force Academy:

The Man and the Issues

[Title Slide] Lieutenant General Hubert R. Harmon is a largely forgotten figure, even here. I'd guess the average cadet knows little about the man other than that his name graces the building where the superintendent's office is located.

My goal is to explain why our first Superintendent was a great man and officer and why he was so vitally important to the Air Force Academy.

Harmon came from a military family. [MFH grad photo and Madelin] His father had graduated from West Point in 1880. (Here's his graduation photo along with that of his wife) Both of his older brothers graduated from Hudson High, and both of his sisters married West Point graduates. [Hubert as child in uniform] Hubert decided that he too wished for a career in uniform, He initially leaned towards the Naval Academy. Fortunately, he came to his senses before he could make such a disastrous mistake. Even so, getting into the Military Academy proved challenging.

In 1910 he received an appointment and reported to West Point. [Hubert and high school buddies] Only a week into basic training, however, he was summoned to the office of the superintendent. I'm sure you can all realize how surprising such a call must have been to a basic. The superintendent, Colonel Hugh Scott, held up a cadet roster and noted that there were two other cadets on it named Harmon: were they of any relation? Hubert proudly responded yes, they were his brothers. In that case, said Scott, you will have to leave: you can't expect the American taxpayers to pay the tuition for three boys from the same family.

Hubert was sent home. He was dumbfounded, and his father was outraged. He wrote the Army chief of staff asking him to overturn the superintendent's decision, but got nowhere.

Soon after, his parents left for an assignment in the Philippines, so Hubert moved into a boarding house in Brooklyn. He told his story to his Irish landlady, who was the sympathetic sort. Family lore has it that she said they should talk to her husband, who was involved in local politics, to see what could be done. That night, while the master of the house was sitting in his

favorite chair, Hubert told his story. The man was moved. He had friends. The next day he and Hubert were off to talk to the local ward boss. Hands were shook and drinks were drunk; Hubert was told not to worry. Sure enough, a few months later Harmon received a *second* appointment to the Military Academy. When he reported in June 1911 his oldest brother, Kenneth, had just graduated and Colonel Scott had moved on to a different assignment. The new superintendent asked no questions of Basic Cadet Harmon. He was in to stay.

Regarding West Point in 1911: the Military Academy had not kept up with the times. The military training program and academic curriculum were mired in the previous century. Military training consisted of a rigid caste system emphasizing excruciating attention to detail, endless drill, parades, and inspections. There was little discussion of tactics and even less of military strategy. Cadets were being to be platoon leaders. [HRH and "squirrels"—his cadet buddies]

Academically, things were even worse. The curriculum was a single list of courses that all cadets took. There was no transfer credit for those who had attended civilian college. There was no validation credit for those intellectually ahead of their peers. There were no academic majors and no electives. Classes were held six days per week. The classroom environment consisted of rote learning with cadets "reciting" their lessons to the instructor. Math and engineering courses generally involved the entire period spent at the blackboard working problems. All cadets were graded every day, grades were compiled weekly, and were then published for all to see. This happened for all four years. Outside observers complained that the curriculum was barely advanced over the high school level.

As for faculty, instructors were Army officers, and virtually all were Academy graduates with no additional schooling beyond what they had learned as cadets. Most of the texts were written by the department heads, and any changes to these texts had to be approved by the Secretary of War.

And yet, this system, as out of date as it appears, worked. West Point provided the vast majority of senior commanders in America's wars, and these commanders included virtually all the senior commanders on *both* sides during the Civil War, John Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, George Patton and a host of others. The first crop of leaders of the Army Air Forces and Air Force were also West Point grads: [collage of WP grads] "Hap" Arnold, Hoyt Vandenberg, Nate Twining, and many others. Clearly, West Point was doing something right. Its

emphasis on discipline, duty, obedience, and attention to detail had proved its worth.

To his dismay, Hubert was soon recognized as the younger brother of Millard Harmon. One of the typical hazing activities of the time was to have a plebe crawl around on all fours to the amusement of the upper classmen while reciting a ditty: "Doodle Bug, Doodle Bug, your house is on fire!" Millard had been quite adept at this questionable skill and had earned the nickname of "Doodle." Hubert was tasked to see if he could do as well as his brother. Alas, the skill ran in the family, and he too was good at emulating insects; he was given the nickname of "Little Doodle." Over the years, Millard lost his and was always referred to by his colleagues as "Miff." Hubert would be called "Doodle" by his classmates and colleagues for the rest of his life.

Harmon did poorly in most subjects, save drawing. Militarily, he was always at the top of his class, or the bottom actually, in the number of demerits received. [HRH grad photo] As a consequence, Doodle remained a cadet private and never attained cadet rank during his four years. In cadet parlance, he was a "clean sleeve"—he wore no stripes. Coincidentally perhaps, I should note that the commander of the Army Air Forces during World War II and the only five-star airman in our history, "Hap" Arnold, was also a "clean sleeve" during his cadet career. The first chief of the independent Air Force, General Carl Spaatz, had also been a "clean sleeve" while at West Point. His successor, Hoyt Vandenberg was, you guessed it, also a "clean sleeve." Harmon was in good company, although I'm not sure that should comfort us!

Like many cadets, Harmon escaped from the daily drudgery of the cadet experience through athletics. Despite his small size, he was barely 5'8" and 135 lbs., he played football, baseball, hockey and tennis. He was the back-up quarterback on an outstanding undefeated football team. The story is told that in one game he attempted a quarterback sneak on the goal line. He dove for the end zone, but was grabbed in midair by a burly defensive linemen who simply held him there until the referee blew the whistle. He lettered in football, a feat for which he was extremely proud—there were only 14 members of his class who wore the Army "A" on their sweater.

Harmon's class of 1915 was one of the most illustrious in Academy history, usually referred to as "the class that stars fell on" because so many eventually made general. [high rankers in class of 1915] The list included five-star generals Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley—both of whom were football teammates and fellow lettermen; four-star generals James Van Fleet

and Joseph McNarney, and seven other lieutenant generals; one of whom was Hubert Harmon.

I have spent some time on Harmon's time at West Point because I believe that the cadet experience, for all of us, is of tremendous importance in our lives. The values we learn, the experiences we share, the friends we make, will to a great extent determine the course of our careers and lives. That was certainly the case with Hubert Harmon.

Class standing determined graduation assignments. Because Harmon graduated 103 out of 164 he had few options. He chose coastal artillery, largely because that had been his father's branch, and because it was better than the infantry. He went to artillery school and then his first post, but he did not find it interesting. He then received a letter from Miff who was in pilot training at the time. The letter advised his younger brother that he too should transfer to the only branch of the Army that had a future—the Air Service.

Hubert did transfer and won his wings in May 1917 as the US was set to enter the World War. [HRH pilot certificate] To his chagrin, he was sent to Texas to work in training command. Miff went to France, and Hubert pestered him to pull strings to get him "over there" as well. Finally, in mid 1918 Hubert received orders for France; he was to be a "pursuiter"—a fighter pilot. On the troop ship over, however, Harmon contracted the flu and nearly died. He recovered, briefly, and then went down again a month later. His oldest brother Ken received a phone call in France telling him that his little brother was about to die, so he hurried to the hospital to be with Hubert at the end. Upon arriving he found his brother awake and alert: he wondered what Ken was doing there. Harmon was lucky. The influenza epidemic of 1918 was the worst plague in history, killing 675,000 Americans and at least 50 million people worldwide. Today we grow concerned when H1N1 kills several hundred, in comparison, with today's population the pandemic of 1918 would have killed 3 million Americans and perhaps 350 million worldwide. The numbers are staggering. Yes, Hubert Harmon was lucky, although he didn't think so. The near-death experience cost him the chance to fly combat, and he always regretted that.

Harmon remained in Europe for the next two years, spending one year in Germany in occupation duties and another year in London disposing of war surplus materials. London was eye-opening. He was impressed by the cultural breadth of Royal Air Force officers. They could discuss not only military matters and airpower, but could also converse about art, music, literature and political affairs—subjects that Harmon had barely encountered while at West

Point or in the Army. RAF officers were also great party-goers, and he recalled playing a game in the mess called "sink the ship"—what we would term "buck, buck." He would remember this tour.

He returned to Washington in late 1920 to serve as an executive officer to the chief of the Air Service. [HRH in cockpit and at desk in civies] This was an important position, giving him an education in organization, administration, finances, maintenance and supply, doctrine, and of course, operations. His office was situated between those of Major General Mason Patrick, the Air Service chief—and that of Billy Mitchell. Harmon must have gotten an earful. Later he became deputy head of the Information Division. This pivotal division has no real counterpart today; in the 1920s it combined the activities of intelligence, public affairs and legislative liaison. Harmon's boss was "Hap" Arnold. Major Harmon learned a great deal, and in 1925 even testified for the defense at the court-martial of Billy Mitchell.

The most important aspect of Harmon's six years in Washington involved the pursuit of his greatest challenge. Her name was Rosa-Maye Kendrick. [Rosa-Maye] Rosa-Maye was beautiful, witty, intelligent, cultured, a bit of a tomboy, and the daughter of the US Senator from Wyoming, John B. Kendrick.

Doodle chased that girl for five years before she finally caught him. He wrote her poetry [poem from HRH to RM—pause to let audience read] He sent countless letters telling her how much he adored her. When she would go back to the family ranch in Wyoming each summer and at Christmas he was distraught. His frequent letters often included little drawings. [Two drawn notes from HRH to RM—pause to let read. Note: in second, "Capt Tiny" and "Baby" are characters from book that they read; they often addressed each other letters by these names as well.] It was very romantic. Harmon flew out to see her each year, ostensibly on official business, but on one occasion there was a mishap: he attempted to take off from Sheridan too heavily loaded and ended up plowing through a fence. The plane was totaled, but Harmon was uninjured. He, and the remains of the aircraft, returned to Washington by train. [HRH in DH-4]

Despite Harmon's countless marriage proposals, Rosa-Maye put him off. This changed in January 1927 when Hubert told her he had orders for overseas—he was going to the Philippines. Would she accompany him as his wife? Rosa-Maye immediately burst into tears and refused to answer. Three days later Hubert admitted he had been pulling her leg: yes, he *was* going overseas, but it was as the air attaché to London. Did that make a difference?

They were married a month later. [Wedding photo] The wedding was a major Washington social event given the prestige of Senator Kendrick. Guests included the president and Mrs. Harding, vice president and Mrs. Dawes, secretary and Mrs. Hoover, and assorted senators, congressmen and generals. A week later the newlyweds were on their way to London.

This was an important tour for Harmon because once again he was exposed to the Royal Air Force officer corps that had so impressed him earlier. He remained struck by their educational breadth and worldview. He liked the way the RAF educated its officers.

After three years the Harmons returned to the States and a tour at West Point. Major Harmon was a battalion tactical officer—what we would call a group AOC. He saw the Academy from a different perspective, but noted how little had changed in either the curriculum or the military training system. This stood in stark contrast to what he had just seen in Britain. Perhaps the most important part of this tour was the birth of daughter Eula, who soon became the apple of her father's eye.

Back to school. The Harmons spent the next year at Maxwell Field at the Air Corps Tactical School. This was the golden age of the Tac School when the theories of strategic bombardment and the "industrial web" were being spun by a faculty of young and eager airpower advocates. From there, the Harmons went to Fort Leavenworth for the Command and General Staff School, then a two-year program. This prolonged emphasis on tactical land warfare, so different from the broad, visionary thinking he had experienced at the Tactical School, was a drudge. Harmon therefore focused on other matters. I came across this notation in his medical records: "wound, contused, moderately severe, dorsal surface, right foot; accidentally incurred while playing golf, when hit on foot by golf ball knocked by another player." The price of freedom doesn't come cheap. In addition, in 1934 Kendrick was born. The two would become close friends as well as father and son. [Family photo]

In the summer of 1935 Lieutenant Colonel Harmon returned to operations. He was posted to the 1st Wing at March Field in California where he would serve as the wing exec under the commander, "Hap" Arnold. After a year on staff, he became the commander of the 19th Bomb Group. Then it was back to school again, this time to the Army War College.

The War College was pitched at a higher plane than the Staff School, and here Harmon learned the intricacies of war planning, mobilization, and industrial base issues. It was a good year, and he was then posted to the War

Department General Staff. After two years Col Harmon returned to the Air Corps and was sent to San Antonio, Texas, as the Kelly Field base commander. His immediate boss was his brother Miff. [Miff Harmon shaking hands with HRH] After a year, Hubert received his first star and became the commander of the entire Gulf Coast Training Center, one of three major training commands that trained the hundreds of thousands of crew members needed for the war effort.

But Harmon was eager to go to war—recall that influenza had kept him out of combat in the First World War. In November 1942 he got his wish, as upon receiving a second star he was sent to the Panama Canal Zone to command the 6th Air Force. [Miff and HRH with mom] (Here's the proud mom and two of her boys.) The Canal was a crucial strategic asset to the US, allowing the fleet to travel between the two oceans and fight a world war against Germany and Japan. As it turned out, however, the enemy was never able to seriously threaten the Canal. [Map of Caribbean area] Instead, the main threat was the German U-boats, but they had been driven east beyond Trinidad by the time Harmon arrived. He chafed at being in a backwater theater and pushed Washington for a transfer. He got his wish, and in November 1943 was sent to the Solomons to take command of the 13th Air Force. [HRH at desk in Solomons] His boss would again be Miff, who was the commander of US Army forces in the South Pacific.

Harmon's timing remained bad. He arrived in the Solomons when the battle for Guadalcanal was over, and the entire island chain was falling into Allied hands. [Map of Pacific] It was soon apparent that the war was moving west into the Southwest Pacific Area under General Douglas MacArthur, and north into the Central Pacific under Admiral Chester Nimitz. (Note the map; as you can see the Solomons are in far northwest corner of South Pacific area; so the campaign there are essentially over) As a result, the 13th was moved to the Southwest Pacific, but Harmon did not accompany it. The air commander there was General George Kenney, and although he had known Harmon for years, the two were not close. Kenney told Arnold he wanted a new commander. Harmon was sent home after only six months in theater. This was a bitter disappointment for him, the biggest set-back of his career. He had thirsted for a combat command and upon receiving one thought he had done a good job, but others thought differently.

It was typical of Harmon's character that when given a lemon he made lemonade. Returning to Washington for a staff job, he threw himself into his work. Arnold directed him to form a new command, the Personnel Distribution

Command, whose mission was to handle the hundreds of thousands of men and women going overseas, returning from overseas, being retrained or reclassified, or in convalescence. [HRH behind mike] Harmon crisscrossed the country setting up scores of new facilities to handle the flood of personnel. As the war wound down in Europe, this flood increased. Harmon was one of the busiest men in the Army Air Forces by the middle of 1945.

When the war ended, Harmon considered retiring—like many he was tired of the long hours and separation from family. He was persuaded by old friend Ira Eaker, then Arnold's deputy, to hang in there. In 1946 Harmon was reassigned to Panama, largely the job he had held in 1942. But he knew this was just temporary, and in early 1948 Harmon was promoted to lieutenant general and posted to New York City. He was to be the US air representative to the United Nations.

He thought it would be a significant job. The new UN was slated to have major military forces at its disposal. Harmon's job as a member of the Military Staff Committee was to advise the UN leadership on air matters. [HRH with MSC and Van Fleet—who was his classmate] As it turned out, the wartime allies—the US and the Soviet Union—soon fell out and could agree on almost nothing. The UN's military forces were never established because the Soviets and the West could not agree on their size, composition, location or function. Harmon had been steered into a dead end job.

After months of meetings that went nowhere, he approached the Joint Staff in Washington and said he was willing to do any tasks that they might have in the offing—anything to keep him busy. He was soon given a greater challenge than he had bargained for.

In 1949 the defense budget was being severely cut, and as often happens at such times, the military services began squabbling among themselves. The main conflict in this instance was between the Navy and the Air Force. The Navy wanted to build aircraft "supercarriers" that could house multi-engine bombers capable of delivering atomic weapons. The Air Force objected. Strategic bombing was ***its*** mission, and it wanted more heavy bombers, B-36s, to accomplish that mission. [B-36] Charges flew back and forth, ultimately resulting in Congressional hearings and the firing of several high-ranking Navy officers. While this drama was playing out, the Joint Staff decided to look more deeply into an underlying premise. The issue was the US warplan that envisioned an atomic air offensive conducted by the Air Force. Could the

airmen carry out this mission? The Joint Chiefs appointed a special board, chaired by Lieutenant General Hubert Harmon, to look into it.

Harmon's board consisted of himself and four other high-ranking officers, two each from the Navy and Army. After two months of study the Board released a top secret report that concluded the Air Force could carry out its mission as planned, *but* this would not defeat the Soviet Union. In fact, Harmon's team concluded that although massive damage would occur to Soviet industry and armed forces, they would still overrun most of Europe; moreover, the atomic strikes would confirm Soviet propaganda and perhaps even strengthen the resolve of the Soviet populace. This was *not* what the Air Force wanted to hear, and the chief of staff, General Hoyt Vandenberg, was livid. [Vandenberg] He insisted that the report be changed. Although under great pressure, Harmon refused to budge and the report stood.

The significance of this incident becomes apparent in December 1949. Vandenberg was grappling with the issue of a new Air Force Academy. It was a subject that had already consumed much of his time and that of his staff: what should be its mission? Should it be 4 years like West Point and Annapolis or a 2-year finishing school? What about the curriculum and who should teach it? Where would it be located? And more practically, how would legislation establishing and funding an academy be steered through Congress? Vandenberg needed a senior officer to manage such affairs; someone with political astuteness and administrative experience, someone who had a demonstrated ability to plan and stand up a large organization from scratch; someone of unquestioned integrity who would not be swayed by the political currents that would swirl around all decisions regarding an academy. He turned to the man who had defied him a few months earlier, Hubert Harmon.

This decision speaks eloquently and deeply regarding leadership, followership and integrity—regarding both men.

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Let me now say a few words about Harmon the man.

In stature, Harmon was slight, around 5'8" and 135 pounds. He had hazel eyes and thinning gray hair. He smiled often. [HRH in blues]

He smoked prodigiously, even after being diagnosed with the lung cancer in 1956 that would soon result in his death.

Harmon enjoyed a scotch and water and drank an occasional beer—usually after a round of golf or while watching a football game. He was never known to drink in excess.

Rosa-Maye was the only woman in his life. Throughout their marriage he remained devoted to her. She was always more serious than her husband, but they filled each other's gaps. Rosa-Maye and Hubert remained each other's best friend throughout life. [HRH and RM at reception]

As a father, Hubert was attentive and affectionate. He loved to play with his kids, take them to the park, talk to them, and read to them at night. He taught Kendrick to play chess, which they did often. Eula was his princess, and he always had enormous affection for her.

He remained a devoted Army football fan, but his great love was golf. [HRH golfing] He was good but not outstanding. While Academy superintendent he golfed with Ben Hogan, Omar Bradley, Governor Dan Thornton, Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott, President Eisenhower and many others. To be Harmon's aide, an officer had to be an accomplished golfer and card player. e was a good poker player and sometimes played for high stakes. During one session at the Army-Navy Club he won enough to buy a new Cadillac.

He liked dogs but not cats.

His reading tended towards the likes of Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling or Jack London. He enjoyed happy movies, especially when they starred classy ladies. As for music, he preferred classical.

Hubert's most enjoyable and rewarding hobby was carpentry, and he spent many evenings tinkering in his workshop. He much enjoyed making a chair or table for friends and family. He continued to doodle, and his many drawings, often humorous, are scattered throughout his papers and letters. [Collage of HRH drawings]

He remained a plain-spoken man. He was honest, forthright, and candid. He was a man of rigid integrity—he didn't even cheat on his golf scores! If you asked him for his opinion, you would get it, unvarnished. Yet, it was this simplicity of spirit that was so appealing.

As a boss, he was a dream. His long-time driver commented: "I didn't work for him. He treated me like one of the family." One aide later said "I always felt that he could do anything, and the reason he could do it was that people worked *for* him and didn't work because they were scared of him." He never yelled and seldom even got angry. On those occasions when it was necessary to discipline a subordinate he would seek humorous ways to soften a blow. For example, Harmon's aide, Captain Tom Curtis, was a good fighter pilot, but a poor organizer. On one occasion the two were headed for the flight

line to catch a plane and Harmon asked: "Tommy, did you get the flight lunches." "Oh geez, general, I forgot!" Harmon then reached behind the seat and brought out the boxes, showed them to Curtiss, and said: "Tommy, I'm the best aide you've ever had."

All of Harmon's talents at interpersonal skills, diplomacy, ingenuity and doggedness would be required for his duties as Vandenberg's Special Assistant for Air Academy Matters. Neither man anticipated how difficult and lengthy it would be to establish an Academy. It would be five years before Harmon could push the required legislation through a recalcitrant Congress, find a suitable site and architect to build the facilities, hire the faculty and staff, and design a first-rate curriculum, military organization, and athletic program.

Why did it take so long? [“not a supporter”] There were several reasons. First, President Harry Truman was not a supporter of a new air academy. The reasons for this are unclear. He had been a National Guard officer in the First World War, so perhaps he thought citizen-soldiers were adequate to fight America's wars. Perhaps the nasty and public fights between the services, and his even more public fight with General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War, had soured him on service academy graduates. Perhaps he just thought a new academy was too expensive.

[“army and navy not helpful”] It should also be noted that the other services were not overly supportive of a new academy either, and their concurrence *was* necessary for Congressional approval. They feared a dilution of their own influence in Congress and a drain on their funding. And of course, the on-going fights between the Air Force and the Navy over bombers and carriers referred to earlier did not leave the sea service inclined to help the airmen.

More specifically, there were unforeseen events that periodically cropped up to block Harmon's plans. [“Korean War”] In June 1950 the Korean War broke out, catching America totally by surprise. By the end of that year the massive Chinese intervention set the US back on its heels. Congress told the Air Force this was no time to be distracted by an Academy that it deemed of low priority.

[“WP scandal”] In 1951 the war situation had stabilized, but then a massive cheating scandal occurred at West Point and ninety cadets were expelled. This incident and its adverse publicity put Congress in no mood to discuss a new academy.

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The following year the scandal had faded from memory, but 1952 was an election year ✠ ["Election year"] and members of Congress were concerned with how academy legislation would play in their states and districts. Both parties were reluctant to take action until the smoke cleared.

As anticipated, the Republicans won in 1952, and Dwight Eisenhower would be the new president. In 1949 he had co-chaired a board for the Secretary of Defense that had looked at the need for military academies in general and a new Air Force Academy in particular. He came down strongly for both. It was therefore expected by Harmon and the Air Force that things would now move quickly towards the required legislation.

They did not. The new administration had a necessary period of coming up to speed, as did Republican leaders in both the House and Senate—after all, they had been out of power for twenty years. ✠ ["New Administration"] An Air Academy was not at the top of their priority list.

During this period Harmon retired from active duty—twice. Although he had hoped to see the Academy through to completion, the interminable delays caused him to retire in February 1953. He was immediately recalled to duty in anticipation of good news from Congress, but when this was not forthcoming, he retired again in June, and moved to San Antonio. Finally, with a strong push from President Eisenhower, Congress acted. In anticipation of legislative passage, the president himself recalled his old friend, classmate and football teammate to active duty in November 1953. This time the stars were indeed aligned. Congressional hearings were held in early 1954, and in April legislation establishing the United States Air Force Academy was signed by President Eisenhower. ✠ [Ike signing AFA bill] Hubert Harmon was named the first superintendent.

Hubert Harmon was the ideal man for the great challenge given to him. He was the perfect choice to fight the agonizingly long journey from conception to fulfillment of the Academy. This was so for several reasons.

Harmon was a gifted organizer and administrator. ✠ ["gifted organizer"] From early in his career it was obvious that his strength lay in staff work. He was conscientious, dedicated, tireless, and meticulous. He knew how to budget his time and prioritize so as to get the important things done first. As he advanced in rank, his duties became more complex and demanding but he continued to excel.

[“personnel relations”] Second, Harmon was a master of personal relations, and this was not an affectation. He genuinely liked people and their company. He cared. He listened. He killed people with kindness. Everyone loved him.

[“intellectually inclined”] Third, Harmon was intellectually inclined to establish and run the Academy. He had spent nine years as a student at the college level, with three more in educational administration and five years in a training environment. He knew what a quality education entailed and what was required to make it work. He understood what motivated students and how they learned. He recognized the requirement for well-qualified teachers and administrators.

In addition, his four years as Vandenberg’s Special Assistant made him the unquestioned expert on the subject of an academy. He had the time to think through all aspects of an air academy in great depth —its curriculum, disciplinary system, organization, location, personnel requirements, and construction. He was able to dwell on details.

[“understood politics”] Fourth, Harmon understood the political environment in which he had to work. His education began with staff experience in Washington from 1921 to 1927 where he worked closely with Congress. And then of course there was his marriage to Rosa-Maye and the association with her father, Senator John Kendrick. Harmon’s political education was further advanced by tours in London, command in Texas that involved a great deal of interaction with local politicians, and his tours in Panama and at the United Nations. All of these assignments gave him a deepening appreciation for the intricacies and complications of the political process.

Once the Academy was authorized, Harmon’s warm relations with President Eisenhower became a factor. This closeness was a function of their having been West Point classmates and teammates. By 1954 there were slightly over one hundred men left from the Class of 1915; they had been through three major wars together and had endured the long peace between the world wars when the military was neglected. [Class of 1915 on White House steps—HRH and RM in first row] These men knew each other, and in most cases, liked and respected one another. The president’s support for Harmon, and by extension the Academy, was known and understood by all.

[“HRH loved academy”] Fifth, Harmon succeeded with the Academy simply because he loved it; he loved the idea of an academy; and, most importantly, he loved cadets.

Let me now turn to the challenges that General Harmon faced as the first Academy superintendent, challenges that have continued to echo down through the years and that have been endemic to the Academy experience. The first of these concerns the curriculum. [“Curriculum”]

From early in his career Harmon doubted the utility and focus of the West Point curriculum. He was not enthused by academics as a cadet—except for drawing—and his grades showed it. But this dissatisfaction was not realized until his tour in London in 1920. His assignment on the Air Staff further alerted him to the broadness of the issues confronting the Air Corps. It was during this period that Harmon attended night school at George Washington University, taking courses in journalism, architecture and the arts. He even contemplated resigning his commission and becoming an architect. Although he changed his mind, seeds were planted. As an aside, when the Academy was being built, Harmon took a deep interest in its architecture and made numerous suggestions to the builders. Indeed, the beautiful spiral staircases in the library, Mitchell Hall and Arnold Hall were due to his insistence—he wanted some relief from the relentless lines, angles and rectangles of the buildings in the Cadet Area.

Also influencing Harmon were his experiences in WW II when he served in San Antonio and Panama. Both tours were marked more by the need for political smoothness than operational ability. His return to Panama after the war, when US-Panamanian issues were tense, reinforced his diplomatic skills.

In sum, Harmon’s entire career had convinced him that military officers needed a broad education. He wanted greater interest on the social sciences and humanities. West Point and Annapolis were heavily focused on math, science and engineering. To Harmon, this was outdated and did not adequately prepare air officers for the strategic thinking necessary for a world power. He got his wish. The curriculum in 1955 consisted of 53 percent math and sciences and 47 percent humanities and social sciences.

At the same time, Harmon was intrigued by the idea of a faculty composed of military and civilian instructors. This too was controversial at the time—and indeed still is. West Point had an all-military faculty, and the first vice dean, Colonel Robert F. McDermott, [HRH, Stillman and McD] himself a West Point graduate who had taught in its social sciences department,

maintained that an all-military faculty was essential for the Air Force Academy. He argued that a civilian would only be able to teach the academic lesson of that day; an officer could teach that but also serve as a professional role model. Harmon continued to pitch for having some civilian instructors, but he lost this battle. His faculty and staff were almost unanimously opposed to civilians, and when the Academy opened, its faculty consisted totally of Air Force officers.

These have been subjects that have resonated throughout the years here. The large core curriculum consisting of a balanced mix of academic disciplines has remained basic at the Academy to this day—although the exact definition of "balance" is in the eyes of the beholder.

As for civilians on the faculty, the Academy held to this policy for nearly four decades. These debates continue and probably always will.

[“Honor Code”] The second major issue that Harmon grappled with was the Cadet Honor Code. Harmon had lived with such a code as a cadet, but things were far different then. There was no Cadet Honor Committee; indeed, there was not even a written statement of an honor code, although cadets nonetheless understood. Harmon later commented that things were simple back in 1915: if a cadet was viewed as having overstepped the bounds, a group of his peers would get together and discuss it with him. If the group decided the man had violated his honor, he was told to leave. In Harmon's words: "we took up a collection, gave the guy a hundred bucks and told him to beat it."

In the 1920s the Military Academy adopted an Honor Code that was run by the cadets, and Harmon saw this system in action when he served as a battalion tac in the 1930s.

Harmon himself chose the wording for the proposed Air Force Academy Code: "We will not lie, cheat or steal, nor tolerate among us anyone who does." He did not want to impose the Code upon the cadets; rather, he hoped that after receiving instruction on the concepts of honor and integrity and how they relate to an Air Force career, they would accept it voluntarily.

The first step was to educate the faculty and staff, many of whom were not academy graduates and were thus unfamiliar with its strictness. The "toleration clause" caused concern, and it was feared that it would trouble new cadets as well. Many youngsters were taught they should not "rat-out" their friends or siblings, but the toleration clause required cadets to do precisely that: to inform on friends they saw committing an honor violation. Many questioned whether such a principle was viable.

SCRIPT

To Harmon, the toleration clause was the heart of the Honor Code. It made the Code self-policing and countered the "us versus them" syndrome—officers as enforcers policing cadets who would then close ranks and protect each other. Harmon recognized this would be the most difficult idea for cadets to grasp.

Harmon introduced the Honor Code to the new cadets during their basic training. He has been seen as the "driving force" behind the Code, but he did not have to drive very hard: the first cadet class voted to accept the Honor Code in September 1955—just as they were beginning their academic classes.

Problems quickly developed, however, over the scope of the honor system and how much it governed cadet activities. In short, would the Code be used to enforce regulations? Harmon was leery of this and quoted Mark Twain to underline his concern: [HRH quote] "Honesty is our most cherished possession and we should use it sparingly." By this Harmon meant that the purpose of the Honor Code was to shape and influence a cadet's behavior—to make him *want* to live an honorable life. [HRH quote] The Code should not exist for "easing the authorities' administrative or policing responsibilities."

But this was indeed a problem. A concept inherited from West Point called the "Five Points" concerned five serious infractions: drinking, gambling, narcotics, hazing and limits. ["Five points"] Our Academy adopted this rule, which stated that when a cadet signed in from an off-duty privilege, he was testifying by his signature that he had not violated any of the rules regarding the Five Points. Cadets found this unfair, especially regarding drinking. It happened. To tie a cadet's honor while on a legitimate off-duty privilege to whether or not, in the privacy of a hotel room, he drank a few beers was unfair. If a cadet were caught in a bar, then he should be punished accordingly—in the military sphere for violating regulations. Such activities should in no way be considered an honor violation. This provision was eventually removed from the Honor Code, but not until 1960—after the first class had graduated.

Another controversial issue was "discretion." Two philosophical questions surrounding the Code concerned the severity of an offense and the severity of punishment. Most criminal or religious codes distinguish between felonies and misdemeanors, between mortal and venial sins. The Honor Code did not: *all* lies, cheats and steals were of equal weight. Similarly, the punishment for all transgressions was the same—disenrollment. Thus, a black-and-white standard was imposed on a decidedly gray world. West Point came to believe this was out of balance, and during the 1950s cadets there

began considering such factors as age of the violator, severity of the offense, mitigating circumstances, and whether the offense was self-reported. In some cases, the Honor Committee would give a cadet a second chance—he would be given "discretion." This policy was formalized at West Point in 1959. It would provoke controversy and vigorous debate at the Air Force Academy as well, but would not be incorporated into our Code for another decade.

In sum, the cadet Honor Code was one of the new Academy's most distinctive and unique features. Yet, time would reveal that some of the systemic problems already noted—the Code's black-and-white nature regarding degrees of "dishonor" and the severity of punishment, and the issues of toleration, discretion and the enforcement of regulations—would be oft-debated in the years ahead.

[“Athletics”] A third challenge facing Hubert Harmon concerned athletics. All wanted the Air Force Academy to have intercollegiate teams, but there was disagreement over the balance between having teams that could compete on the national level with the emphasis on a challenging academic curriculum that would be recognized as the hallmarks of a first-rate university.

Cadets then were graded on a daily basis and their grades accumulated and were published each week. Those on academic probation were prohibited from engaging in intercollegiate athletics until their grades improved. The athletic director, Colonel Robert Whitlow, became much exercised over this policy when he saw his teams being devastated by poor grades. He noted that as of 28 September there were already 79 cadets academically deficient—over one-quarter of the Cadet Wing. Worse, over 80 percent of them were athletes. [Whitlow quote] Wrote Whitlow: "I can't believe a man is automatically less bright merely because he wants to play a sport. We need to demonstrate to team members that they can participate without being at such a tremendous disadvantage in study time with respect to their classmates." The work load had to be reduced.

The dean, Brigadier General Don Zimmerman, [HRH and Zimmerman] offered little relief: an athlete at any institution was always at an academic disadvantage relative to his classmates—"it is the price he pays for fame." There would be no let up. I would note that Zimmerman had lettered in three sports at West Point, so he understood the problem.

The issue of cadet academic workload was one of several involving Colonel Whitlow. There would soon be missteps that would lead to his removal. It's useful to review the background regarding his selection.

Harmon heard a briefing given by Whitlow in 1950 in which he had argued: [Whitlow quote] "In the current U.S. national outlook, an educational institution primarily contacts the U.S. public not by means of its superior educational program, but by means of its athletic representatives and resulting comment in the sports pages of the nation's newspapers." He noted that Annapolis, which played a tough schedule, received "nothing but praise" for its athletic prowess; whereas, [Whitlow quote] West Point "is treated with decided coolness on all sides for its pantywaist schedule." Whitlow wanted the air academy to play serious football; his ideal schedule would include every year powerhouses like Alabama, Michigan, Southern Cal, Notre Dame, and, of course, Army and Navy.

This study sold Whitlow to Harmon: he liked his enthusiasm.

Upon arriving at Lowry AFB, Whitlow was a bit more enthusiastic than was appropriate. He sent a letter to ROTC programs around the country hoping to stir up interest in the Air Force Academy among prospective athletes. One line caught the attention of several: "The national reputation of an educational institution is rarely determined by academic achievement, but by athletic victories which are highlighted in the public eye by the newspapers, radio and television." This was the same point he had made in his Air Staff briefing in 1950, but now it rang a discordant note. The president of Kansas State University sent a strongly worded complaint to Harmon, who responded that such a belief was "certainly out of line with our policy." Whitlow was forced to retract his statement.

Whitlow persisted in his aggressive posture, arguing that [Whitlow quote] "unless the Air Force Academy is to be relegated to the stature of the Coast Guard Academy in the eyes of its officers and the general public, the Air Force must move rapidly to have teams capable of competing successfully with the two older services." To assist in grooming athletic prospects, funds from the Academy's Athletic Association were used to set up a program at the New Mexico Military Institute for the purpose of boosting test scores for athletes so they could get into the Academy. As Whitlow phrased it: "New Mexico is where I put boys who needed a few more smarts."

Harmon's stance on all of this was, frankly, subject to misinterpretation. For example, [HRH quote] he wrote that "if we play down athletics and make it appear that a coming star will have no chance to glitter in our firmament we will surely fail to attract to our Academy many young men of the type we

desire." He then added: "no discrimination was to be made for or against a young man simply because he was an athlete."

There was a razor-thin line in Harmon's reasoning: he wanted quality athletes to choose the Academy, not only because he wanted respectable athletic teams, but also because his own experiences convinced him that athletics nurtured qualities that were highly desirable for future officers. His career had taught him this—recall that his most illustrious classmates were fellow athletes Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley. [HRH with Ike] On the other hand, he was reluctant to distort the cadet selection process in favor of athletes.

In 1957 the Air Force Inspector General conducted an investigation of the Athletic Department. It faulted Whitlow for his entire attitude towards athletics at the Academy. Its report stressed that "national standing of the teams will be of secondary importance." The IG also condemned Whitlow's "cooperative program" in New Mexico. The report concluded emphatically: "Considerations of athletic capabilities will not be permitted to compromise an impartial cadet selection and appointment procedure." Whitlow was fired.

The Academy football team of 1958-59—the first that included seniors—went undefeated and earned a Cotton Bowl berth, raising eyebrows around the country. [Whitlow and Buck Shaw and Merritt] This entire issue of the role of athletics at the Academy would, like the matters of curriculum and the Honor Code, continue to reappear over the next fifty years. Were athletics, especially intercollegiate football, overemphasized? The honor scandals of 1965 and 1967 largely involved athletes, and many have blamed the scandals on such an overemphasis. This is a multi-faceted question that deserves greater exploration.

["Mission"] The final challenge facing Hubert Harmon, and indeed every officer and cadet that has been associated with the Academy ever since, concerns its mission. As early as August 1948—before he was formally associated with the academy, Harmon wrote that the first and most important goal regarding an academy must be the articulation of its mission statement: "upon this all other plans and decisions depend." As superintendent, he focused on this matter. The mission statement he devised will sound familiar to all of you: it is not dramatically different from the Academy's mission statement today: [1955 mission statement]

> The mission of the United States Air Force Academy is to provide instruction, experience, and motivation to each cadet so that he

> will graduate with the qualities of leadership and knowledge required of an officer in the United States Air Force, and with a basis for continued development throughout a lifetime of service to his country, leading to readiness for responsibilities as a future air commander.

This is important. These *words* are important, but too often we memorize them without internalizing them—without thinking about what they really mean. Too often we interpret the mission within the narrow confines of our own organization: as faculty members we judge success on how well we fulfill our academic responsibilities; as AOCs we view victory in terms of our duties as military trainers or airmanship instructors; as coaches we measure progress by team records. Yes, all of these are valid measures of merit, but for the Academy to be successful much more is necessary. Bluntly, the success of the Air Force Academy must be measured by its ability to produce military commanders, specifically, combat commanders. That is why we exist, and we must never forget that simple truth. Harmon understood that, and indeed, so did his entire generation: they had fought three major wars. *Leadership* had been the key to victory then and would be in the future. As a consequence of this fundamental priority, everything the Academy does, everything ***we do*** as members of the Academy community, must be focused on fulfilling that primary mission of producing military *leaders*.

When the first cadets arrived at Lowry AFB, Harmon was already 63 years old—an age when most men are already grandfathers. He looked the part. [3 pictures of HRH] It is therefore understandable that he was seen as a warm and paternal figure to cadets, and this warmth was reciprocated. He drew strength and energy from his association with cadets. It was not unusual for him to leave his office and walk outside between classes, just so that he might meet and talk to the cadets. A wonderful story that epitomizes the relationship between Harmon and these young men was later recalled by his wife.

One evening the general returned home from work and Rosa-Maye noticed the smile on his face and that he was in an unusually upbeat mood. She asked him why. Harmon responded that when he left the office and stepped out onto the sidewalk he encountered two cadets who were passing by. Upon seeing him, they snapped to attention, saluted smartly, smiled, and exclaimed: “Hi, General Harmon!” It made his day. It summed his life.
[Walk off slide—HRH portrait]

SCRIPT

The combination of respect and affection this incident reveals says much about Harmon and his impact on the Academy and its personnel. Hubert Harmon, the Father of the Air Force Academy, was the ideal man for the job.