



2012 DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE

MR. EDWARD E. "TED" LEGASEY CLASS OF 1967

HEAVY RAINS SPLASH across the surf, speckling the white sandy shores of Kiawah Beach in South Carolina. Edward "Ted" Legasey '67 stands on his porch, thoughtfully overlooking the ocean. He takes a moment to collect his thoughts before retiring to the study. It's time to begin reflecting on a lifetime of memories, education, careers and challenges.

Because the Air Force Academy served as the beginning of his professional development, it seems a fitting launch pad for the story. "I'd never been on an airplane before," Legasey proclaims about his trip to USAFA as a Basic Cadet. "I got on an airplane in Boston and flew to Denver. Then I flew from Denver to Colorado Springs in a DC-3. We bounced all over the sky on that hot summer day and I found myself asking what the hell did I just get myself into? Just showing up was a bit of shock to my system!"

Legasey recalls a vast expanse of land that was dramatically different from his home in New England. "We got

picked up by a bus at Peterson AFB and driven across what could only be described as desert. I don't think we saw three buildings the whole trip up to the Academy."

After arriving on the campus, the true nature of Colorado had a special greeting for the new cadets. "My first experience with the altitude happened on the very first day of Inprocessing. They had us fill up these giant laundry bags with blankets and clothing and then run up the stairs from the ground level to the Terrazzo. I thought my lungs were going to come right out of my body—this was before BCT even started! My classmates and I were of course terrified of whatever was going to happen next; but we really got to know each other through the process."

Like all graduates, Legasey has fond memories of his time at USAFA. "I was one of the shortest guys in my class and I would invariably get stopped on the terrazzo by some bigger guy. 'You little man, halt! How tall are you?' I'd look up and say, 'Sir, I'm 7' 5" tall but I run

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in a two foot ditch!' They would laugh like hell and I would take off with a bit of levity."

The young cadet soon decided early on that if he was going to put up with all the strife at the Academy, he was going to soak up as much as he possibly could from the experience. "I was determined to extract as much value as I could for the price I was paying," Legasey recalls. "I took as many courses as they'd let me take—I played sports, I traveled. I did everything they would let me do to try and capture as much from the experi-

1969 to September 1973 he was assigned to HQ Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC), Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio where he worked as an Operations Research Analyst on large projects.

"At Air Force Logistics Command I met a lot of people who were on an upward trajectory in their careers. I had the good fortune of being assigned to a leading edge computer project at the time. We were preparing to make the move from punch cards and tape to disc storage."

The computer systems that we take for granted today had their origins at the hands of Legasey and his fellow

“ My parents taught me my values. At the Air Force Academy, I found an environment where the values were totally aligned with my own. There's never a right way to do a wrong thing. There isn't enough perfume in the world to make a pig smell good. If it's wrong, it's wrong ... ”

ence as was possible. That method served me well, both in my Academy experience and later in life.”

Staying true to his pact of getting as much from the Academy as he could Legasey would go on to become Group Commander, Basic Cadet Training Squadron Commander (Honor Squadron) and Co-Captain of the ice hockey team. “One of the things that happens at all military institutions is that you form very deep relations with your fellow students,” he says thoughtfully. “You spend so much time together that you have no chance to be anything but the genuine you. You really get to know who someone is—not who he wants to be or who he's pretending to be. We really had a deep understanding and respect for one another. Those kind of relationships are special. Here we are 45 years later and those friendships are still going strong (I can't say brothers in arms because we now have more than 30 years worth of female graduates as well!).”

Legasey explains that the graduate community is a great group of people to belong to. “It actually extends beyond our own service academies and into West Point and Annapolis. We all feel part of a shared bond because of the common experiences we went through. It's a great network to be part of.”

As a new second lieutenant, Legacy was awarded an AFIT scholarship and attended the University of Pennsylvania from August 1967 to June 1969, where he earned an MS in Operations Research. From June

team members. His high tech assignments eventually led him to the Joint Test Force at Edwards Air Force Base for the B-1 bomber.

Legasey explains, “Logistics support had a slot on the team and we needed to know what it would take to support a weapons system that had more embedded computers than any aircraft in the world. The airplane had not yet flown and it was an exciting time at Edwards. There were a lot of weapon systems that were going through flight testing at that time. I got to see a lot of my classmates, test pilots and even astronauts.”

Working in technical environments with a cross section of Air Force personnel and civilian contractors exposed Legasey to a wide array of opinions, work ethics and personalities. These experiences would eventually shape his ethical road map for the future of his career. “I grew up in an environment where my parents taught me my values. At the Air Force Academy, I found an environment where the values were totally aligned with my own. There's never a right way to do a wrong thing. There isn't enough perfume in the world to make a pig smell good. If it's wrong, it's wrong. When you get into the workforce, things change. You encounter many different people with many different values.”

In 1976, Legasey left active duty after nine years of service to pursue the next chapter of his life. After a

brief stint at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, he stepped into the private sector to co-found SRA, a global information technology firm, with friend and mentor Dr. Ernst Volgenau.

“My partner and I had a very strong agreement that we were going to build a company that was grounded in a set of core principles and we were going to hire people who rallied around those principles. And that’s what we did. We had the wonderful experience of being able to create that culture. We were able to bring our new hires in one at a time and we looked for people who had integrity, intelligence, a strong work ethic, positive attitude and who were really good at what they did.”

Legasey and Volgenau had two very simple core values: honesty and service. Under those values they built a whole company culture. “We were in the business of creating value for our customers and we built a reputation for exceeding our customers’ expectations.”

Legasey retired from SRA in 2004 and moved to a small community just south of Charleston, South Carolina. “I really wanted to get back to working with my hands restoring old houses; unfortunately the real estate market wasn’t too healthy at the time.”

Unable to swallow the thought of trading in his working lifestyle for a rocking chair on the back porch, Legasey turned once again to the Academy and served on the AOG Board of Directors. The first major fundraising campaign was coming into fruition when he took over as Chairman of the Board. “Raising private dollars in significant amounts was not something the alumni organization had done before, and we

had a number of startup challenges. We had to educate our graduate community as to why private money was important, even at an institution that was funded by the government. As we looked over the horizon, it became clear that more and more margin of excellence programs were not going to be funded by the federal government. If these programs were truly of value, they would have to be privately funded.”

Legasey admits that many of the AOG’s fundraising efforts were met with friction by certain members of the graduate community. Many believed that the alumni organization’s focus was best reserved for graduate services and not fundraising. “Today,” Legasey says, “we have an AOG which serves to nurture the graduate community while the USAFA Endowment is devoted solely to fundraising. It’s a good system.”

Looking back on his life, Legasey offers a bit of advice for those just starting their Air Force service. “Throughout my entire career,” he recalls, “I’ve tried to view the things that I encountered not as challenges, but as opportunities. Cadets today should take all of the opportunities they’ve been presented and make the most of them.”

From education, to healthcare, to the arts, Ted Legasey remains involved in a variety of local nonprofit organizations in the Charleston area. “I’m motivated by the opportunity to do something useful. I’m an incurable operating guy. I want to help. I’m not out to just add another board of directors position to my resume. I wake up every day, excited about what I’m going to do.”

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