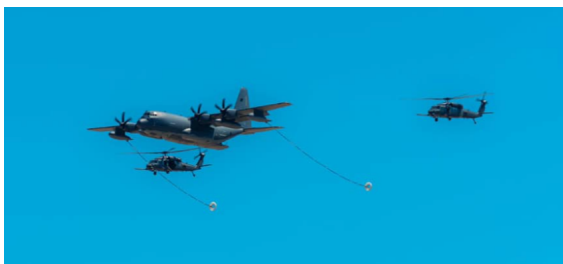


From: **Southern Arizona AOG** soazaogpresident@gmail.com
Subject: April Newsletter
Date: April 12, 2020 at 7:34 PM
To: soazaogpresident@gmail.com



Social Distancing Edition

April Newsletter





Southern Arizona airpower represented by the 162nd Wing at Morris ANGB and the 355th Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB

Hello Southern Arizona AOG,

All of us wear our USAFA experiences a little differently. I'm not going to say I wasn't a little beat up when I walked out of Falcon Stadium almost 28 years ago, freezing cold and soaked to the bone from the worst graduation day weather in the history of the institution.

The further removed I am from that day, however, the more I feel gratitude for the friendships I made and for the experiences I had there and the less I remember the difficult times. I hope you feel the same.

Similarly, we all derive slightly different lessons from the experience. That said, one of those lessons is one we all share and that's useful now in the age of COVID-19. Namely, things are never as bad as they seem and regardless of how bad the situation feels in the moment, it will get better, probably sooner than you think.

As a wet-behind-the-ears kid, you endured the obstacle course, the assault course, the tear gas tent, boxing, the 10-meter tower, water survival, and 4 degree training sessions.

You survived the SERE prison camp and the trek--the checkpoint is juuuust over the next ridgeline...

You made it through SAMIs, In-Ranks Inspections and parades on a hot day in that jacket they fitted you for three years earlier and 15 pounds ago when you were a skinny 18-year-old kid. Also, maybe that round at last call last night wasn't such a great idea...

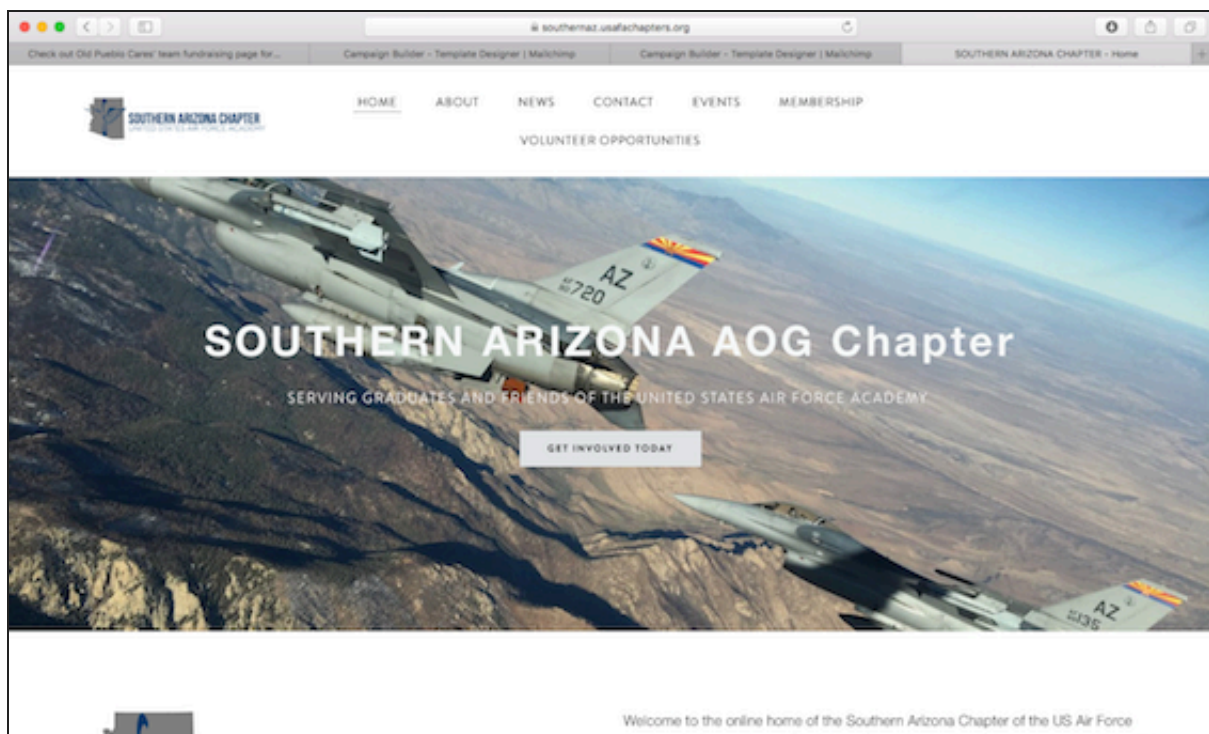
In your Air Force career, you've gritted your teeth and checked off the days until it was time to redeploy back home. Then, you held it together and checked off a few *more* days while you waited for parts to arrive to fix the tanker that was supposed to drag you across the ocean.

At least one of our chapter members that I know of spent a good chunk of his 20s looking at the inside of a cell as a POW in Vietnam.

You're an asset to your community because you know how to find the good news when it's in short supply. You know how to think clearly when outcomes are ambiguous because you've been through the wringer, and you know things will work out in the end.

April 1st marked the 66th anniversary of USAFA Founder's Day. Next year, when social distancing is itself a distant memory and we're able to get together for a proper celebration, we'll look back at the coronavirus as just another obstacle that we helped our classmates and neighbors overcome.

Soon-To-Be-Completed Website





SOUTHERN ARIZONA CHAPTER
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

Academy's Association of Graduates. Check back often to keep up on news from the desert. Please reach out if you have questions.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CHAPTER

The STBC Website is now simply the website. You can find it [here](#). Please keep in mind that website 1.0 is the first step on a proverbial 1000-mile journey. It's live and you can find some good information there, but it's going to become a lot better and more useful as time goes on, especially once we start receiving useful suggestions from folks like you on what you'd like to see. Thanks in particular to folks on the Facebook group page who offered up lots of great airpower pictures from DM. Those images will find their way onto the page when our webmaster can find the time to make it happen.

In the spirit of service before self, please check out the following page in particular:

If you click on [Volunteer Opportunities](#) in the main menu, you'll be taken to a page with two online forms you can fill out. One is to volunteer to help out grads who need help because they're stuck at home due to COVID concerns. Information from that form goes to Jim Hogan ('71). Jim very graciously offered to coordinate efforts to deliver food and/or medicine to our members who are stuck at home.

Also on that page is a form that goes to Warren Priddy ('74). In addition to his duties as chapter secretary and treasurer, Warren serves as the chapter liaison to the Tucson Community Food Bank. Ordinarily, we help out this organization by volunteering manpower to help sort food during the annual USPS food drive. It's a fun and rewarding day, but you're good and worn out by the end of it. This year, because of coronavirus, rather than manual labor or physical food donations, the food bank needs cash more than anything.

Be on the lookout for an e-mail in about a week that will have all of the details.

Southern AZ Grad-Owned Business in the News

A valuable lesson we learned in SERE (in addition to the comments above) was that when you're in a survival situation, you have to look for creative uses for your available assets. The reel-to-reel movies (talking about 1989 here) they showed us in the academic portion of the course portrayed downed aircrew building everything from solar stills to shelters to fashionable and effective survival clothing using nothing more than parachute gore, 550 cord, and airplane parts.

The guys at [Flying Leap Vineyards](#), Mark Beres ('91), Marc Moeller ('91), and Tom Kitchens ('90), obviously took those lessons to heart. With closures due to COVID all but shutting down their primary business, they assessed their assets. Being resourceful USAFA grads, they realized that they could use their distilling equipment to create a product that is in critically short supply, neutral grape spirit (NGS), the key component to hand sanitizer. Now, they're working around the clock turning grapes into a virus-killing product. Check out the story about it [here](#).

Do you or your spouse own a business in Southern Arizona? We'll eventually be adding a link on the website to a page dedicated to grad-owned businesses. We want to highlight you!

News From the Hill





The Class of 2020 graduates this coming Saturday, the 18th of April. Due to the extraordinary nature of the world in the time of coronavirus, their Academy experience will be cut short by over a month. They will throw their hats in the air as the Thunderbirds fly over, but it will be in the cadet area instead of the stadium. There will be no family or friends there to take part with them. Bizzy and I will be flying our Air Force Academy flag that day in their honor. If you're so equipped, perhaps you could do the same. Post a photo on the Facebook group or reply to this e-mail with the photo attached. You can watch the event streamed live at [this link](#).

Here is the message to the Class of '20 from Superintendent LTG Jay Silveria ('85):

Cadets,

When the class of 2020 entered USAFA we were a nation at war. You have all signed up to serve in a time of war – to make a difference. We still battle terrorism and extremism around the world, but today we are at war with another enemy, a global pandemic, and that fight is unconventional. As a commander in conventional conflicts I had years of history to call on when making decisions -- a playbook we don't have as we battle this pandemic. We must make unconventional decisions and take what some would consider extreme measures. We must make bold choices, and we will.

We have asked a lot of all the classes already, and your nation will continue to ask you to lead boldly in this uncharted territory as you continue your careers. In the last two weeks commanders across the force have made some of these bold choices and continue to do so as we navigate this current global crisis.

Here at USAFA we have done the same. In consultation with our SECAF and Chief we have made a carefully considered choice designed to balance our two priorities: health, both physical and mental, and getting the class of 2020 to graduation. After many hours of discussion with leadership up and down the chain of command, I have made the decision to graduate the class of 2020 early.

On April 18th, the class of 2020 will receive their diplomas in a ceremony designed by cadets. It will not be the traditional graduation ceremony you have imagined for years, but it can be one of a kind and unique...like the class of 2020.

That day is approaching fast, and there are still a lot of unknowns. All of the MEs are working on getting done what we can and waiving what we can't. Expect conversations with your faculty and AOCs as we get through the next 18 days together. I'm sure you have a million questions – and the answers may be different for each of you. You've already heard from the Dean, please patiently engage with your faculty and AOCs as we get more answers to you.

I'm proud of you all, and will be honored to serve alongside you. Please continue to care for each other as we move forward.

JS

News From the AOG

Last year, the USAFA AOG membership voted to place the Air Force Academy Foundation (formally know as the Air Force Academy Endowment) and the Association of Graduates under the leadership of a single CEO. Here's the official announcement:

The Association of Graduates and Air Force Academy Foundation are pleased to announce the selection of Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Gould '76 as the first-ever dual-hatted president and chief executive officer overseeing the operations of both independent nonprofit organizations.

“We were incredibly fortunate to have a strong slate of applicants for this important leadership role. Each candidate was a USAFA graduate who wished to selflessly serve the graduate community as CEO,” said Col. (Ret.) Cathy McClain, '82, AOG chair. “The joint selection committee voted unanimously to recommend Mike Gould to both boards for their approvals. The AOG Board and the Foundation Board both approved our recommendation ”

the Foundation Board both approved our recommendation.

“Mike Gould has been a transformational leader in the Air Force and in the civilian world,” said Jack Kucera '78, Foundation chair. “The Foundation and AOG board members are excited to welcome Mike as our new president and CEO. We expect great things as he guides the organizations in their independent missions to support the Academy, cadets and the graduate community.”

Gen. Gould said he’s humbled by the opportunity to lead two critical supporting USAFA partners in the days ahead.

“I am looking forward to continuing to serve our alma mater during this critical time in USAFA’s history,” he said.

Watch for more information in Checkpoints magazine and other AOG and Foundation communications channels.

More From the AOG

Once again this month, I'm including the body of an e-mail from Karina Ross, Director of Constituent Relations at the AOG. Karina sends out lots of great information to the chapter presidents. Rather than trying to distill all of the information, I'm going to simply give it to you whole:

Hi Chapters,

I want to share some updates and resources with you all on how we can support the Class of 2020, the Air Academy Family, and where to best receive news/updates from USAFA and the AOG.

Class of 2020

The Class of 2020 really needs your support right now. We have created a website that has all the different ways you and your chapter can help. Please visit: [Class of 2020 Support](#)

- *Letters of Encouragement - We have launched a virtual letter campaign where graduates and the USAFA Family can write letters of*

where graduates and the USAFA Family can write letters of encouragement to the Firsties. If you wish to write a letter to the Firsties, please visit link: [Submit a Letter](#)

- *ZoomieLink – Join the ZoomieLink community, you do not have to be an AOG member to join, platform is for all USAFA graduates and alumni. On this platform cadets are being encouraged to reach out to grads to make sure they have someone to talk to, get advice from, stay connected, etc.*
- *Become a Cadet Mentor - If you are interested in being a mentor to cadets, please visit: [Become a Mentor](#). You must be on ZoomieLink to be a mentor.*
- *USAFA Touchpoints Action Team - Are you currently working on something to support our cadets? USAFA has a Touchpoints Action Team to help get resources where they need to go! Please email: USAFA.GraduateLiaison@usafa.edu to discuss your options and make sure we can get the best support to our cadets.*

Please at this time hold off on sending any care packages to the Cadet Area, the US Air Force Academy Team is diligently working together to streamline this process to ensure safety of the cadets.

Just an FYI, at this time we are currently building a similar support site for all cadets. As soon as its ready I will send it out to you all.

USAFA Family-Owned Businesses

Many Academy graduate and USAFA family-owned businesses are struggling right now due to the global pandemic. Please visit [Help USAFA Family Businesses](#) to see how you can help or list your business.

Official Communications from USAFA and AOG

For official communication and news please visit the following links: [USAFA Official Facebook Page](#), [USAFA Supt & Coronavirus Updates](#), [USAFA AOG Official Facebook Page](#), [USAFA AOG Official Site](#). Currently, social media is your best tool for staying update with official updates from USAFA, ways to support cadets and grads, and AOG news and resources.

Additionally, we are working on creating another platform as a resource for the Air Force Family, more to come!

Thank you for your support and all your efforts!

Karina Ross | Director of Constituent Relations
Association of Graduates | U.S. Air Force Academy
Office: 719.247.8700
<http://www.usafawebguy.com> | [Like us on Facebook](#)

Lots of information this month! Please reach out if you have any comments or suggestions or if you'd like to volunteer to help out.

Until next time,

Go, Falcons!



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