

Vi at Silverstone Veterans Day Ceremony, November 11, 2019

Comments

In remembering our veterans today, I will highlight two: each a graduate of my Alma Mater. They represent both the prominent and the obscure who have served our country in uniform. One might consider them bookends for the entire spectrum of veterans, present and past, which we honor today. These two graduates are studies in contrast, yet in two ways, one trivial and one significant, they are alike. Most, if not all of you are familiar with one of these graduates; I doubt if anyone here will have heard of the other.

This six-pound book is *The Register of Graduates, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York*. It includes names and a short biographical sketch of all graduates from the first class of 1802 through the class of 2015, all 72,406 of them.

They are listed by year of graduation and in order of their class standing, and are numbered sequentially from the first graduate in 1802 to the last in 2015. To find a graduate's biography the first step is to go to the Alphabetic Locater in the front of the book. Beside each name is that sequence number, from 1 to 72,406, and the year of graduation. Then turn to the section for that graduation year and walk down the list until you find the sequence number; and there is the name and biography you are looking for.

In some cases, it is easier than that, as is the case with the two graduates of interest today. For instance, my first alumnus was in the class of 1903, and I

know he was first in his class academically. I can skip the Alphabetic Locater and go to the section for the class of 1903 and look at the first name listed.

Douglas MacArthur—born in Arkansas, appointed to West Point from Wisconsin.

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General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur

He was recognized for conspicuous gallantry in WWI having been awarded two distinguished service crosses, the nation's second highest award for valor, and seven Silver Stars, the third highest; he was chief of staff of the Army; after retirement he became military advisor to the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines; he was recalled to active duty after Pearl Harbor and assigned as commander of the Southwest Pacific theater in WWII working in concert with Admiral Chester Nimitz in the United States' two-pronged attack across the Pacific toward the Japanese mainland; on September 5, 1945, he received the surrender of the Japanese aboard the battleship *USS Missouri* on behalf of all allied forces;

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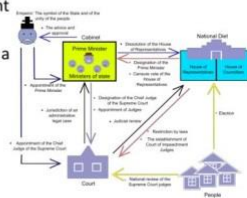


he served as military governor of Japan and with his staff wrote Japan's constitution;

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The "MacArthur Constitution"

- A two house parliament called a Diet
- The Emperor was now a symbolic ruler
- Universal suffrage- everyone over age 20 can vote
- Bill of Rights



he conceived of and commanded the brilliant flanking attack at Inchon, South Korea, that saved that ally from conquest by the North Koreans in 1950.

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General Douglas MacArthur conceived and executed the Inchon invasion despite the advice of many no to gamble a WWII-style amphibious landing in dangerous Korean waters. Behind MacArthur is naval force head R/Adm. J.H. Doyle and M/Gen. E.M. Almond. MacArthur stuck to his guns. So did the Navy. Wolmi-do fell after a tremendous naval bombardment, and the Inchon landing proved a tactical success.

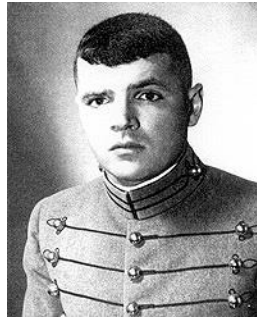
Without General MacArthur's personal influence, Japan may not be today's stable democracy and our strong ally, and the Korean Peninsula would possibly be unified, but under a communist regime.

Douglas MacArthur was the son of army Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur, who had been awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions as an 18 year old lieutenant in the battle of Missionary Ridge in the Civil War in November 1863. Douglas idolized his father, and his father was his inspiration to pursue his career in the Army.

The other graduate is my classmate. He too is easy to locate in the *Register* because his name is at the very bottom of the class listing: number 706 out of 706.

Richard Hawley, Jr. He was born in Alabama but grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia.

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Richard A. Hawley, Jr., 1968

Rick's brother, Ralph, said that at about age twelve Rick decided he wanted to go to West Point. Even before that he knew he wanted to be an Army officer. Like MacArthur, Rick was inspired by his father who had deployed to France in September 1944, two months after Rick was born and three months after D-Day. His division, the 94th Infantry, reinforced General Patton's Third Army during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, and afterward as it advanced east into Germany. The 94th Division fought side-by-side the Army's elite 101st Airborne Division. In a battle in the spring of 1945, a German tank round ricocheted off a tree and struck Rick's dad six inches below his left hip destroying his leg and ending his combat tour. After he was wounded and before he was evacuated one of the 101st Airborne Division troopers cut the 101st Division insignia off his own sleeve and gave it to Rick's dad, telling him he had earned it. He spent over two years in various hospitals recovering before returning home to his family fitted with a wooden leg.

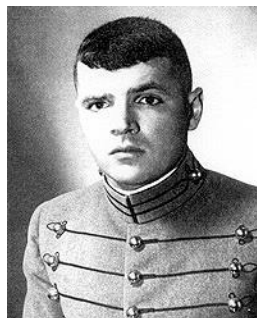
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**Captain Richard A. Hawley
94th Infantry Division, France, 1944**

Rick's mother was a niece of the colorful Marine Major General Smedley Butler, the most highly decorated Marine in history at the time of his death in 1940. It isn't surprising that Rick grew up in a highly patriotic family with close ties to and admiration for the military.

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Richard A. Hawley, Jr., 1968

Rick graduated from high school in 1962 and applied for an appointment to West Point. He didn't get one. He went to Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama

for a year and applied again, and again failed to get an appointment. After a second year in college he applied a third time. It would be his last chance since he would soon exceed the maximum age limit for entry to the academy. The third time was the charm, he made it.

He had struggled to get in, but his struggles had just begun. The curriculum at West Point wasn't easy. It was an engineering-heavy curriculum with a course load of twenty-one credit hours per semester—seven and a half of those in math each semester freshman year. Rick and math never got along—an ominous relationship for one immersed in an engineering course of study. Failing a course puts a cadet in jeopardy; he either passes a re-exam in the course or is found to be deficient. If deficient, he is given one more chance. He can take a re-entrance examination. If he fails that he is either set back a full year or separated.

Cadets are organized into companies of about 100 cadets from all four classes. You could think of companies as analogous with fraternities, without the parties, beer, girls or fun. Classmates who were in Rick's company plebe (or freshman) year soon learned that Rick studied hard and when lights went out at taps, 10:00 p.m., he usually wasn't done studying. He made a deal with the barracks custodian, or janitor, Bobbie Brown, who gave him access to a small office in the basement after taps. Bobbie Brown may have recognized the steel will and dogged determination in Rick that made him want to help him. You see, Bobbie Brown knew something about challenging the odds and prevailing. In 1918, when he was fifteen, Bobbie Brown lied about his age and enlisted in the Army. Twenty-four years later, in 1942, as a first sergeant in General Patton's 2nd Armored Division, he fought in North Africa earning a battlefield commission. He crossed Omaha Beach on D-Day in June of 1944 as a platoon leader in the 1st

Infantry Division, assuming command of his company when the company commander was killed. In October of that year his company attacked a fortified German position. For his actions that day he was awarded the Medal of Honor. When he retired from the Army in 1952, he had earned that Medal of Honor, two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star and eight purple hearts.

Every semester, all four years, Rick failed at least one course. When other cadets went on summer or Christmas leave, Rick would remain behind at West Point, studying for his reexams or reentrance exams. He was well-known among many professors who gladly gave Rick extra instruction. He worked hard, winning their admiration and respect with his courage, sense of humor, faith, and belief in himself. Rick always pulled through.

One such professor was Major Norman Schwartzkopf who taught Engineering Mechanics. You may recall that he, as a general, commanded the U.S. and allied forces in the first Gulf War, nearly thirty years ago, successfully liberating Kuwait from the clutches of Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

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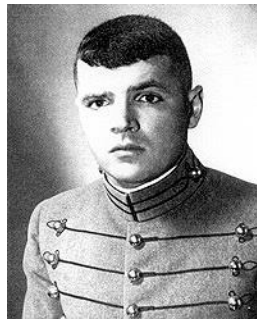
**Lieutenant Colonel Schwartzkopf
Vietnam 1969**



**General Schwartzkopf
Saudi Arabia, 1990**

After his teaching tour, then LTC Schwartzkopf commanded a battalion in Vietnam. Rick's classmate and good friend, Jimmy Walsh, was assigned to LTC Schwartzkopf's battalion in 1969. Schwartzkopf told Jimmy how he had worked hard to keep Rick proficient in his engineering mechanics course. He then remarked, "I really love that guy".

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Richard A. Hawley, Jr., 1968

Classmates who knew Rick well say he liked everyone, even those who nobody else liked. He wasn't judgmental; he maintained a joyous attitude; he always looked on the bright side. Rick loved spending time with friends; he loved being a cadet; he would do anything within his power to help another. He lived a life—as one put it—"of energetic positiveness". In spite of being always under relentless academic pressure, nothing seemed to bother him.

Rick also had a quiet abiding faith. He became close with Chaplain James Ford, the senior protestant chaplain at the academy. When cadets would come to Chaplain Ford wanting to quit, he would mention Rick as an example of someone who overcame tough challenges again and again.

He was no plaster saint, though. He played practical jokes, sat confinement and pounded the pavement walking off hours of punishment tours just like many of the rest of us.

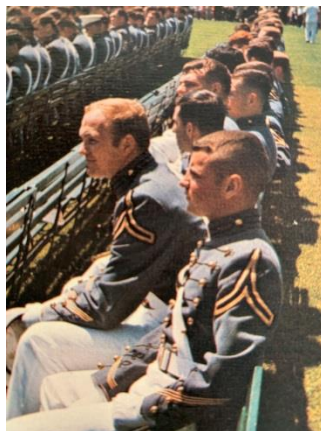
Tom McConnell and Rick were good friends in the same company. The Rick that Tom knew was, well, a passive soul. In Plebe boxing class, Rick had absorbed far more punches than he landed. So what happened one day when both of them were spending the weekend at Rick's home near Philadelphia gave Tom a deeper, more accurate insight into what his friend Rick was all about. Tom and Rick were enjoying conversation, drinks, and music at a yard party in the neighborhood when they noticed a young man at the other end of the yard, about half a football field away, getting ready to set fire to an American flag. Rick handed Tom his drink, told him to meet him at their car, and then took off in a sprint toward the unaware flag-torching protester. Rick hit the culprit at full speed, launching him sprawling in a daze. Rick got up, picked up the rescued flag, and walked calmly out to the car. He and Tom drove off, the point having been made.

Rick's sister, Meg, eight years younger than him, remembers many weekends their home, outside Philadelphia, was often filled with cadets on weekend leave, sometimes without Rick since he was often failing one or more courses and confined to base. One Saturday in December 1967, the day of the Army-Navy football game being played in Philadelphia, Rick was home and he and his house guests were putting on their dress uniforms before heading to the stadium. It was the final Army-Navy game they would see as cadets. The previous three years Army had won two games and tied one. On this occasion Meg recalls hearing her brother say, "I hope Navy wins this year." Heresy, how could he say

that? His reasoning was that it would be a shame for senior midshipmen to graduate without ever seeing a Navy victory over Army. Meg said she has never forgotten that example of sportsmanship.

Several of Rick's classmates that were in his company suspect Rick purposely failed a final test before graduation to assure his hold on last place. It seems classmate Keith Harrelson was gaining on him in the race to the bottom. Rick would not admit to it but did comment that he had been last for so long that he'd be damned if he wasn't going to finish last.

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Graduation Day, June 5, 1968

Rick Hawley, Last Row, Last Man

On June 5, 1968, Rick Hawley walked alone across the stage to receive the last diploma bestowed on our class. Each step was a personal triumph. He had beaten the odds and proven himself. All of us who graduated that day had earned our diplomas, but there was no one who had a better right than Rick to take his place in the Long Gray Line. He exemplified the best of what we were and hoped to be.

Rick chose to be an infantry officer. After graduation he went to Fort Benning, GA, for Infantry Officer School, Airborne School, and Ranger School. After a short stateside tour he arrived in Vietnam and reported to the 101st Airborne Division, the same unit his father had fought with, side-by-side, in World War II.

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First Lieutenant Rick Hawley, USA

Platoon Leader, E Company, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division

Vietnam 1969-70

He was assigned as a platoon leader in the division's 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment. His performance in that position led to his being selected to lead the battalion's reconnaissance platoon.

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Eric Thomas (left) and Rick Hawley

Vietnam, 1970

In April, 1970, about nine months into his one-year tour, Rick and his best friend from West Point, Eric Thomas, linked up to go on R&R together to Bangkok, Thailand.

It was somewhat of an “odd couple” relationship since Eric, an engineer officer, graduated 18th in the class—the top 3%; whereas Rick **WAS** the 100th percentile. Eric’s tutoring had helped pull Rick through some of his courses.

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**First Lieutenant Rick Hawley, USA
Platoon Leader, E Company, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division
Vietnam 1969-70**

Two weeks after they returned, Rick’s reconnaissance platoon reinforced an understrength rifle company that was occupying an abandoned fire support base near the demilitarized zone (DMZ)—a base that would provide artillery support for ground operations against the North Vietnamese army. The company flew into the base on May 5, and began setting up defensive positions. Rick’s platoon was assigned the southwest sector of the perimeter to defend. The next morning, at 5:00 a.m., a North Vietnamese battalion attacked with small arms, rifle

propelled grenades and satchel charges. Its main attack was directed against Rick Hawley's sector. Rick and nine of his seventeen men were killed.

During his tour in Vietnam, Rick had written to more than fifty people--friends and relatives many of his parents' generation. His family received over two hundred letters of condolence. His mother answered every one. Chaplain James Ford sent his condolences telling Rick's parents that Rick had always been and would remain comfortable in God's house.

Eric Thomas, Rick's best friend, escorted his body back to the United States. Chaplain Ford officiated at Rick's funeral and interment in the West Point cemetery. Eight years later he would become the chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Several of Rick's classmates had become very close to the Hawley family, even to the extent of being considered "surrogate sons". At least four classmates or other friends named their sons after Rick. Years later classmate Mike Brennan told Rick's mother, "I didn't name my first son Richard Hawley Brennan just because Rick was the best guy in the world; I named him after Rick because Rick just didn't know how to quit."

Not only his classmates, his chaplain, his professors, his siblings, those he wrote to, and a World War II hero janitor sensed something exceptional about Rick, but also the soldiers he led.

In August, 2005, a website titled "The Virtual Wall—Vietnam Veterans Memorial" received the following posting to Rick Hawley's page: "Captain Hawley, I have thought about you often in the last 35 years. How, when we were in the bush talking about country music, plans after Viet Nam . . . I was always looking

forward to getting out of the Army while you looked forward to your career IN the Army. I served under your leadership in September, 1969, when you were a 1st Lt. You were a super nice guy and I saw you more as a friend than an Officer. We got along very well even though I was only a Corporal and two years older than you were. Your integrity and bravery will always be remembered . . . From a friend, Wesley Wieghmink, Wilburn, Arkansas.”

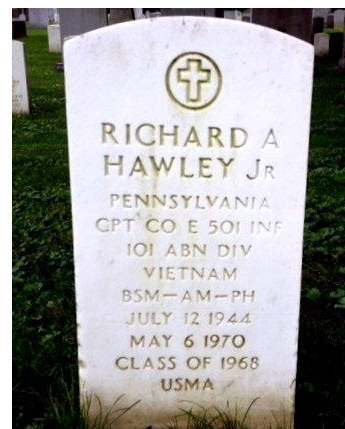
Rick’s father and his inspiration survived his son by fourteen years. He was buried in Arlington National in Cemetery the fall of 1984. James Ford, chaplain of the House of Representatives officiated at the funeral.

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Richard Hawley

Arlington National Cemetery



Richard Hawley, Jr.

West Point Cemetery

More than a decade after Rick’s death, Mike Brennan, a classmate wrote a tribute to him ending with the following:

“Perhaps our fondest memory of Rick is the one most characteristic of him. Once during Plebe Year when academic pressures were particularly great, we noticed that Rick would disappear from the company for an hour or two in the afternoon.

Thinking to help him, a few of us went along with him one day. We found ourselves at the Post Cemetery and the Old Cadet Chapel. For over an hour, Rick guided us around, reciting the histories of many of the less-renowned dead, West Point graduates who had served in every war since the Academy's founding. Rick helped us see that those dead had once been like us, young men, impatient, waiting to be free of the gray stone womb [of West Point]. They had made it through, and so would we. More importantly, those men in their selfless service had given us the right and choice to grow in freedom. We had thought to help Rick that afternoon; instead he had helped us. Many times since, when we found we needed strength and solace, we have returned to those graves—and to his. Rick must rest well there, for he is among comrades."

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These two graduates are both easy to find in the *Register of Graduates*, and both were inspired in their career choice by their fathers. But they are very different in other ways. The one, with a career spanning decades, had a towering intellect applied to warfare and governing that shaped world events to advantage of our country and the free world. The other with a career cut short to less than two years, had a heart so big and determination so fierce as to indelibly register, with

esteem, affection, and awe, in the memories of those fortunate enough to have known him.

Indeed, our country needs its Douglas MacArthurs who can shape events to its advantage, but we do not need many like him. And, our country needs its Rick Hawleys. We could never have too many like him.