**50 YEAR AFFILIATION PROGRAM POOPSHEET**

*This document was prepared by KC Brown ’69 and briefly edited by Cathy Kilner ’90. Please direct any questions or comments about this document to:* *50YearAffiliation@wpaog.org**.*

One of the WPAOG’s better initiatives over the past 30 years, this program more than any other provides a tangible link to the Long Gray Line in forming bonds between today’s cadets and those who graduated half a century before. The purpose of this poopsheet is to guide future 50 Year Affiliation Program leads through the major events of the 5-year effort and to provide lessons learned from the experiences of the Classes of the ‘Sixties.

The twin secrets to success of the 50 Year Affiliation Program (50YAP) are to shadow the class ahead of yours at every Affiliation event in order to learn from their involvement, and more importantly, to involve from the start as many classmates as possible in the effort so as to foment a groundswell of enthusiasm for the relationship. Ignore comparisons by your classmates of what forging relationships with the class graduating 50 years prior to yours might have been like. That was a bygone era as different from the present as today’s Fourth Class System is from what your class underwent. The 50 Year Affiliation program is now a revered Academy tradition and as you will discover, the Corps truly cherishes this tangible link to the Long Gray Line.

At the outset, your class should “adopt” the USMAPS class which feeds your Affiliate Class of 20XX. Although not part of the formal 50YAP program doing so is exceedingly beneficial in preparing your class for the 47-month Affiliation experience in several ways:

1. Early Classmate Involvement. In terms of outreach, adopting the USMAPS class enabled us to enlist the commitment of our own prepsters as well as classmates in the Middle Atlantic States. We attended their R-Day, “sponsored” their Military Stakes, named for one of our USMAPS classmates who was killed in Vietnam, attended their athletic events (particularly those against the Navy Prep School) and provided speakers for their Founders Day, Awards Day and Graduation.
2. Getting to Know the Future Class Officers. USMA classes now select their class officers at the end of Beast. For the past several years, class officers have predominantly come from the USMAPS cohort, so by having adopted the USMAPS class, many of the class officers were already known to us.
3. Forging Informal Relationships. Over the course of the USMAPS year, we developed informal relationships with various prepsters which have formed the basis of a class-wide mentorship program during their cadet years.
4. Prompt Start: Shadow the Affiliation Class ahead of yours at their USMAPS class’ graduation in May. This will allow you to meet the USMAPS Commandant, CSM, Academic Dean and Athletic Director ahead of their R-Day. They truly welcome the association with the 50 year class. This is also to inform them of your recommendation as to whom they could potentially name their Military Stakes. You and your classmates should definitely attend this highly impressive culminating event of Cadet Candidate Basic Training, the entire five weeks of which is run by a detail from the First and Second Class, USCC. The individual so honored is a traditionally a prepster who has either died in battle or who had become an individual of prominence. Your class could be asked to provide items for a memorial to that individual that is sometimes located in the USMAPS Lobby outside their auditorium. In addition, USMAPS may ask your class to provide both a Founders Day and Graduation speaker, whom you should identify early on.
5. USMAPS R-Day: Just as you do for USMA R-Day you should have class couples attend USMAPS R-Day to mingle with the parents. While our class did not host a reception, the Class of 1974 was the first to host a breakfast reception for the prepster families. There is also a full array of post activities on display in Ike Hall which they enjoy. At the USMAPS Commandant’s briefing, the 50 YAP lead may be asked to introduce the program and your class to the assembled parents.
6. **The 50 Year Affiliation Program at the Prep School is coordination through the USMAPS S3. WPAOG can assist your class in connecting you to the correct POC there.**

In organization, your 50YAP should have POC’s designated for major events and activities. At a minimum this should include:

* West Point Parents Club Outreach Chairman – Responsible for recruiting and organizing classmates to coordinate with each West Point Parents Club nationwide. Parent Clubs will often host events for the Cadet Candidates in their area. Many 50 YA classes hand out certificates at these events to the Cadet Candidates.
* Marchback Chairman – Coordinates class participation in the Marchback and any ancillary class events you may wish to organize on the periphery (class events in NYC or West Point beforehand and an evening cocktail-buffet afterwards)
* Brigade, Regimental and Company Reps for Affiliation Outreach to today’s Cadet companies
* Class Flag Presentation Ceremony Lead – the passing of the flag is conducted at the graduation ceremony from Cadet Field Training.
* Class History Plaques/Posters Chairman – Just prior to Reorganization Week of their Affiliates’ Second Class Year, the Affiliation Class places plaques/posters in the Second Class Club bearing summaries of the history of the classes which graduated 200, 150, 100 and 50 years before. This should be organized by someone with a penchant for Academy and U.S. history.
* Affirmation Chairman – This individual arranges for a senior retired classmate to serve as your Affirmation Speaker and recruits at least one classmate per cadet company to represent your class at the ceremony. As the Affiliation Lead, I performed these duties for the class and enlisted another classmate to handle the social aspects of the evening. We arranged for a class cocktail hour and dinner at the Thayer to which we invited Cathy Kilner and COL (ret) Jeff Peterson, ’88, who holds their Chair of Officership in the Simon Center.
* Branch Night Chairman – Recruiting a speaker for their Branch Night at which the cadets learn the branch in which they’ll be commissioned. This also involves recruiting one or two classmates from each branch to attend the ceremony.

In addition to attending all of the above events, the Class President and the 50YAP Lead along with their spouses will receive invitations to the Plebe Parent Weekend Banquet (also called ‘the Crest Unveiling’ banquet, and the Ring Weekend banquet.

The 50YAP is a WPAOG initiative, recognized and supported by the Superintendent, the Commandant of Cadets and the Dean of the Academic Board. The WPAOG point of contact is the Director of Class Services, Cathy Kilner, ’90 (Parent, ’15), (cathy.kilner@wpaog.org). Jo Ann Shipley (jo\_ann.shipley@wpaog.org) assists Cathy administratively. Katie Pace is a new addition to the 50 Year Affiliation team (Katie.Pace@wpaog.org) and will also lead some of the events for your class. Early on, you should determine from Cathy the identities of the Regimental Tactical Officer who serves as the class advisor and the Tac who serves as the Class OIC and forge collaborative relationships with them.

**Budget:** The 50YAP is entirely funded by the 50 Year Affiliation Class. All presentations to the Affiliate class as a whole (Affiliation Certificates, R-Day reception, Class Colors, Second Class Club placards, commemorative coins for Affirmation, initial set of branch insignia, and commemorative lieutenant’s bars) are paid for out of the Class Administrative Fund administered by the AOG. [The Admin Fund is the preferred source of funding for the 50 Year Affiliation; however, if for some reason the Class Admin account does not have sufficient funds to cover Program expenses, class officers may opt to use Class Gift funds to cover all or part of the 50-year affiliation expenses. The funds to cover the expenses will be transferred from the Class Admin and/or Class Gift accounts into a separate temporarily restricted AOG project/fund (AOGB26-01) earmarked with the Class year from which the funds were deposited. Any funds remaining in the AOG account after payment of all program expenses will be transferred back to the Class Admin and/or Class Gift fund pro-rata to maintain the appropriate restriction.]

Classmates participate in the 50YAP at their own expense with all personal expenses bourne themselves (travel, lodging, meals, etc). There is no per diem or reimbursement whatsoever. Formal expenses begin on R-Day on which the 50 Year Affiliation class sponsors a Continental Breakfast for plebe parents and concludes with the presentation of ceremonial lieutenant’s bars at Graduation. The WPAOG will arrange for payment of all these expenses directly out of your Class Admin Fund. Cathy Kilner and Jo Ann Shipley will remind you when a payment for a particular event or occasion falls due. Written approval in the form of an email from your Class President is required to authorize the disbursement. The total cost of the program typically runs about $35,000 according to the following breakout:

**Notional Budget**

* R-Day Reception and Giveaways $1400
* Marchback Banner 800
* Class Flag 3250
* Affiliation Ceremony Coins 7500
* Branch Night Insignia 5800
* Class plaques 400
* Graduation Cards and Commemorative LT Bars 11000

TOTAL $35,000

**Elements of the Program**: The formal 50YAP as determined by the WPAOG and the Superintendent consists of the following:

**Candidate Phase and Relationships with the West Point Parents Clubs (WPPC)**. A noticeable difference between our cadet experience and that of today is the increase in parent involvement. Cadet parents are intimately involved in all aspects of the cadet’s four years at West Point and are present for several major events from R-Day to graduation. USMA now has a special office for parents affairs whose web site ([www.westpoint.edu/parents](http://www.westpoint.edu/parents)) has a wealth of information for 50YAP leaders, from class stats and AY calendars to Leader Team briefings to share with your classmates. There exist active West Point Parents Clubs in every state whose members shower their cadets with attention, from arranging transportation home at Christmas and Spring Leave to providing boodle packages during exams. You can find a list of those Parent Club leaders here: [westpointaog.org/file/ParentClubLeaders.pdf](https://www.westpointaog.org/file/ParentClubLeaders.pdf).

The first introduction most 50YAP leaders and their committee members will have to the local WPPC is at Founders Day celebrations at which the local West Point Society and Parents Club invite cadet candidates and their parents for a pre-gala reception and meeting with the local Society and Parents Club leadership as well as Academy’s representative. Take advantage of this to pledge support for future Parents events especially during your Affiliation Class’ plebe year when parents are most anxious about their sons and daughters decision to attend West Point.

Each June, most WP Parents Clubs host “sendoff” picnics for cadet candidates and their parents. You should arrange for a classmate to attend each and every picnic both to congratulate the candidates and (if afforded the opportunity) give a 5-8 minute talk about the Affiliation Program along with some background on your class.

My class also presented each candidate a certificate of affiliation, signed by our class president and the Director of Admissions. USMA Admissions prepares the certificates, and we carefully coordinated with the local MALO (Military Academy Liaison Officer) to ensure we had a certificate for each candidate, which we placed in a nice folder. Your key point of contact in admissions will be LTC Tim Viles, the Associate Director of Enrollment and Recruitment (timothy.viles@westpoint.edu). We presented the USMAPS class their certificates at their end-of-year awards ceremony. USMA Admissions mailed certificates to those who either missed the picnics or who are coming from overseas. [Recent classes have also included the signature of Todd Browne ’85, the President and CEO of WPAOG on these certificates.]

These presentations serve to formalize the Affiliation relationship to the candidates and their families. Executing this properly necessitates identifying early on a classmate to head this Outreach Committee and to seek classmate volunteers in every state to address the various WPPC’s in their areas. I personally did the WPPC of MD/VA/DC and the WPPC of NJ. Some classmates did two or three as well. An offshoot benefit from the picnics was that this affiliates a classmate with each Parents Club. They forge relationships with the cadets in the Affiliation Class from their home areas, attend WPPC meetings, Joint Service Academy Balls and are often asked to comment on how the class is doing.

What follows is a listing of Major 50YAP Events by Year.

**PLEBE YEAR:**

**R-Day**. The 50YAP program formally begins on R-Day during which the 50 Year Affiliation Class sponsors a continental breakfast for New Cadet parents. We sought out 10 class couples to join us for this event, with each classmate identifiable in his Class polo shirt. In addition, we provided each set of parents an affiliation key chain and bumper stickers which proved quite popular. [Most classes are choosing to do window decals and ‘frisbee’ fold up fans for the family members instead of the luggage tags and bumper stickers]. The breakfast is held in Ike Hall’s Riverside Restaurant and the 50YAP members arrive at 0600 along with the AOG staff who provide the class welcome banner and prominently display it and your class flag alongside their welcome table. Parents come down in metered groups, 15-30 minutes apart, in a highly emotional state having just been abruptly separated from their sons and daughters. The classmates and spouses welcome them, chat with them about the cadet experience and reassure them that their sons and daughters have made the right decision. We made certain to involve classmates who had offspring who attended West Point. This activity ends approximately 1200. 50YAP R-Day Participants should return to Ike Hall Auditorium in the afternoon for the Superintendent’s Address during which he often cites the value of the 50YAP and recognizes members of the Affiliation Class.

**Marchback**. The 50 Year Affiliation Class accompanies the new class on the Marchback from Camp Buckner to West Point, representing their first official contact with their Affiliates. Regrettably, the Academy only allocates 50 slots to the Affiliation Class on the full 10.5 mile hike with another 50 reserved for those graduates with offspring in the plebe class. As many classmates as care to participate are invited to join the formation for the final two miles from the Ski Slope to the Supe’s Quarters. Our class turned this into a formal Mini-Reunion attracting 58 classmates and spouses. In addition, we sought permission from the Marchback OIC; LTC (ret) Vince McDermott, the Associate Director of Academy Advancement to have our class crest embroidered on our Marchback polo shirts, which we arranged through the Retail Sales Director of the AOG Gift Shop, Teresa Gibney (Teresa.Gibney@wpaog.org). Our class gathered at West Point on the Saturday prior to the Marchback for a cocktail reception at the Zulu Lounge, on Sunday participated in the Marchback registration and Academy sponsored briefings and Barth Hall cook-out as well as the plebe talent show at Buckner and then joined the Marchback on Monday morning at 0530 with the main body assembling at the Golf Course at 0900. We cheered our Affiliation Class as they swung through Washington Gate and then fell in behind them - led by our own Hell Cat detachment for the march down Washington Road. It proved an exhilarating experience for all concerned enabling us to talk to our new Affiliates and encourage them along the 8-mile march through the hills. **Caution: advise your classmates to sign up for the Alert Message announcing the opening of Marchback registration (**[**www.westpointaog.org/GMBnotification**](http://www.westpointaog.org/GMBnotification)**) because the 50 Affiliation Class slots are determined by the DTG of their email response.** The alert message usually goes out in late June. On completion, we held a class cocktail buffet catered by the Cadet Restaurant in the Haig Room of the Library, with its sweeping views of the Plain and the Hudson to which we invited the Comm, Dean, USMAPS Commandant and LTC Viles from Admissions. The Dean’s permission is required for use of this facility and is best arranged as far in advance as possible. Contact the Dean of the Academic Board’s assistant, Rosemarie Smith at Rosemarie.Smith@westpoint.edu and 845.938.2000

**Acceptance Parade**. The four 50YAP classes are allocated a total of 8 seats in the Supe’s Reviewing Stand during the Acceptance Parade for the New Class. Usually this means four couples.

**Plebe Parent Weekend**. The 50YAP Class President and 50YAP Affiliation Program Lead are invited to attend the Plebe Parent Weekend Banquet (which MAY include a pre-dinner reception at the Commandant’s Quarters). This is an important event in the life of the class since on this occasion the Class Crest is revealed by the Class President and Chairman of the Ring and Crest Committee. It is equally significant for the 50 Year Affiliation because the classes of today will often incorporate in their crests some symbolism honoring their 50 Year Affiliation Class. The Class of 1969 is represented in the USMA 2019 class crest by the eagle’s 6 talons and nine links of the great chain. Participation in this event should be considered mandatory for these two individuals.

**YEARLING YEAR:**

**Class Flag Presentation**. At the Cadet Field Training awards ceremony for the Third Class held at Camp Buckner in late July, the 50Y Affiliation Class President (or a representative) presents the Affiliate class president (or a representative) their class colors on the Parade Field. The 50Y Class is encouraged to invite up to 10 classmates to attend the ceremony after which there may be a small reception with the class officers and CFT awardees at which photographs are taken displaying the new flag. The following day the entire class runs (or marches) back to Central Area from Camp Buckner led by their new colors. The 50Y Class does not participate in the run/march back. The 50YAP purchases the flag and stand arranged by WPAOG Class Services. [Class Services will reach out to the lead 50YAP POC immediately following the Crest Unveiling event to begin the process of ordering the Class Flag.]

**COW YEAR:**

**Affirmation Ceremony**. Next to R-Day and Ring Weekend, the Affirmation Ceremony is the most significant event in the life of USMA classes today. On the evening prior to the start of academics the entire Second Class assembles in South Aud (now Robinson Auditorium) in their India White uniforms to formally take the Oath of Affirmation by which they commit themselves to complete the course of instruction and if so tendered, to accept a commission upon graduation. Thereafter anyone resigning goes into the Army as an enlisted Soldier for a period of not less than two years. At this ceremony, the Affiliation Class provides a guest speaker and presents each cadet with a coin bearing their class crest and that of the 50 Year Class. WPAOG Class Services will assist you in determining the design and purchase of the coins. We ordered them in sufficient quantity to present one to each of our classmates at our 50th Reunion.

We also chose to turn this occasion into a mini-reunion event and were able to turn out 43 classmates, more than enough for one per cadet company. The 50YAP rep with each cadet company TAC congratulated each cadet immediately following the swearing-in and presented him or her with a commemorative coin, bearing both their class crest and your own, cementing the bonds between the two classes. [The Class of 1969 had both their class crest and the Class of 2019 class crest on one side of the coin and chose to have the WPAOG crest on the back side of the coin (symbolizing the large role that WPAOG plays in connecting the two classes.] For the past decade, Affiliation Classes have chosen as the Affirmation Ceremony guest speaker one of their retired three- or four-star generals. It is best to lock in this commitment at the time of the Marchback. [Guest speakers must be approved by the Superintendent, please notify 50YearAffliaton@wpaog.org as soon as your class has selected its preferred guest speaker – this approval process can take up to 6 weeks.]

Our class held a well received cocktail party and dinner at the Thayer Hotel prior to the ceremony. Spouses and significant others were also invited to the ceremony and were seated in a place of honor at right front of the auditorium.

In addition to the main ceremony at West Point, we also participated in Affirmation Ceremonies for our Affiliates participating in the Academy exchange at USAFA, USCGA and USNA. For these we appointed class reps from among area classmates and gathered other classmates to participate in the ceremonies which in the case of USAFA and USNA were organized by the local West Point Societies. We provided the speakers at USNA and USCGA, while at USAFA the WP Society arranged for an Army general officer serving at either NORTCOM to do the honors. We presented the coins which were picked up by the respective WP Society presidents while attending the WPAOG’s August Leaders Conference.

**Ring Melt**. The Ring Melt, held in late January, is West Point’s newest tradition in which gold provided from the melted down class rings from the Long Gray Line is to be added to the class rings for the Affiliation Class. Soliciting rings of deceased classmates from surviving widows and next of kin is an extremely sensitive topic. We discussed the idea with those widows attending our 45th Reunion and sent a letter to all others informing them of the program. In the end we had nine rings donated to the Ring Melt for our Affiliation Class, a WPAOG record. The cutoff date for submission is usually in the fall the year prior. The stones are removed and returned to the families. For the ceremony itself, the Class President and 50YAP lead (or designated representatives) can attend as well as area classmates and the families of those who donated rings. Since this program has grown in popularity, the Ring Melt site has moved from the Pease and Curren Foundry in Warwick, RI to West Point. There were 69 rings donated for the Class of 2019 Ring Melt. [This event is now held on the Friday morning of 500th Night weekend and the Ring Donors and two 50 YA reps are invited to attend the 500th Night banquet on Saturday evening.] More information about this program can be found here: [westpointaog.org/RingMemorialProgram](https://www.westpointaog.org/RingMemorialProgram).

**FIRSTIE YEAR:**

**Branch Night.** On this mid-November night, the Affiliation Class receives their branch assignments. At this event, the 50 Year Class provides each cadet with their first set of branch insignia as well as a guest speaker for the evening. The branch insignia is enclosed a card that the class provides as well. Speakers from the classes of the ‘Sixties at recent Branch nights have included Ted Stroup, Tom Carney, Barry McCaffrey, Joe DeFrancisco, Freddy McFerren, Mark Hamilton, Larry Jordan and Bob Ivany.

Today branch assignments are determined by a complex process involving the cadet's preferences (each submits their top 6 choices), their order of merit and finally with the Tac and Regimental Tactical Officer validating their "fitness" for a particular branch through a comprehensive talent assessment. This new aspect of the branching process, begun with the Class of 2014, seeks to align cadets talents with what the branches require of their junior officers. Seventy percent of the class must go combat arms. The 13 cadets who head for Medical School each year are commissioned MSC. Over the past decade, Infantry, Armor, and Aviation have each jostled for the honor of being the branch going out first.

My class had at least two classmates from every branch (except Cyber, the Army’s newest)) present for Branch night. We held an informal no-host dinner at Thayer prior to the event at Ike Hall and following the ceremony, we joined the Class of 2019 in the Ike Hall ballroom to celebrate. DMI branch reps will have set up branch rally points for pizza, beer and passing out branch related chum. At the Thayer Hotel bar afterward, we toasted the success of our Affiliates of whom we have grown so proud. As we often repeat to them, "we are theirs and they are ours."

**Graduation**. At Graduation the 50 Year Affiliation Class presents each one of their Affiliates with a set of ceremonial Lieutenant’s bars. These are presented by four senior members of the 50 Year Class to the new graduates as they come off the podium, diplomas and commissions in hand. The 2LT bars are engraved with the last two digits of each (i.e. 69-19).

**Summary**. Both cadets and members of the 50 Year Affiliation Class benefit from this program. The cadets benefit from the advice and support of those who have undergone what they are experiencing and inculcated its values in their lives.

Through their association with those from a half-century earlier, the cadets of today better appreciate the cadet experience. The 50-year Affiliation Program is recognized as an indispensable aspect of cadet development. The participation of the 50 Year Affiliation Class inculcates in cadets a deep appreciation for the Long Gray Line by imparting to them and inspiring in them the ingredients of success distilled from our own cadet experience and the years which followed of service to the nation.

Having “gripped hands” with the Class of 2019 for five years, I am persuaded that my classmates and I have gained as much, if not more, than our Affiliates by virtue of our thoroughly enjoyable association with these superb young men and women and the insights that this experience has afforded us, into state of the Corps and the Academy today.

The many changes to the academic program, the physical demands and pressures on cadet time, notwithstanding, the bed rock values and ethics the Academy imparts remain the same, as does its guiding principles and mission to produce leaders of character for the Army and for our Nation. To that end, I hope this poop sheet serves you and your classmates as you embrace and embark upon his important relationship. Should you find it of value, please pass it on to those who follow after you.

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