

A Brief History of the USAFA Parents Club of East Michigan

by Linda Bailey (Capt. Robert E Bailey II, USAFA 2003)

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After much discussion the original 582 sites considered for location of the new Air Force Academy were winnowed to three: Alton, Illinois; Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Class of 1959 (306 cadets) was the first to graduate from the final chosen site in Colorado Springs. Col. Jack Morgan, an ALO since 1962, had been encouraging the parents for several years to organize a parents group similar to the very successful Parents Club in St. Louis, MO. Finally, in 1972, two moms with cadets attending the prestigious military school more than half way across the country decided to form a Club to support each other and meet other parents whose sons had also chosen this difficult path so far from their Michigan homes.



Betty James (left) & Betty Howey (right) with Col. John Diller, ALO taken at the 30th Anniversary of the E. MI Parents Club in 2003

Betty Howey (Alan, USAFA 1971) and Huston and Betty James (Randall, USAFA 1975) had tried talking to other parents of college age sons but somehow, none of them understood or could relate to what their sons were going through. At that time the Academy had no female cadets. These 3 parents along with Col Morgan met for the first time at the home of Betty Howey and afterward invited other parents to join them. The Parents Club was born! Before long, enough parents were meeting on a fairly regular basis they moved meetings to a room at a City of

Dearborn public building, then to Lawrence Tech. University, later to other locations like Beaumont Hospital Admin building in Royal Oak. ALOs like Col. Morgan were instrumental in helping the parents by bringing news of their struggling Doolies, by providing information about how the military processes work, by arranging for speakers to address this small group of parents who thirsted for knowledge as their sons continued on the path they had chosen in order to serve their country as an Air Force officer, and by serving as rumor control regarding all things USAFA.

In December 1973 John Diller entered the USAF Academy Admission Liaison Officer program with the rank of Lt. Colonel and began the journey of helping young men and women become Air Force officers. Over 35 years Col. Diller also became a major advisor and supporter to the fledgling USAFA Parents Club of Michigan, providing leadership and enthusiasm for parents, prospective cadets and new appointees. So many other influential ALOs over the years helped to provide unity and support for this Parents Club –

George Manuel, Jeff Page, Jim Carlin, Jim Clark, Ed Lundberg, Sonny Elliot and Bill Jenney, who designed a fighter plane logo for the Club to use on fundraising items in order to support the efforts of the parents to provide a few small gifts for the cadets on special occasions. These are just a few of the names that come to mind quickly. There were many more.

In the early years of the Parents Club, Mrs. James, who served as Secretary all the years she and her husband were active, reports that many of the discussions at meetings revolved around making arrangements for their cadets to travel from Colorado Springs to the Detroit area. With the help and connections of the ALOs, they were able to find or schedule military flights directly to Selfridge at no cost to the parents or cadets. For Thanksgiving, Christmas break & summer leave all the parents had to do was find out when to pick the cadets up at Selfridge and all was managed without the use of cell phones!

By 1974 the small Parents Club hosted their first Christmas Dinner Dance – a chance for cadets at home for Christmas break to socialize with other cadets, and parents to show off their officers in training. The first was organized under Presidents Nan & Joe Pruss and held at what is currently Club Venetian in Madison Hgts. on John R. Rd. Back then it was known as Club Liberty. This tradition has continued, becoming the “All Academy Holiday Ball” by including Michigan cadets & midshipmen & their parents from the other US military academies in proper military ball fashion.

In 1975 Congress authorized permission for women to enter all service academies. 1980 was the first graduating class at USAFA which included women. The Class of 1979, the last all-male class, went so far as to unofficially label themselves "LCWB," or "Last Class With Balls" an abbreviation that appeared on many of their class-specific items and still appears at reunions, sporting events and other Academy alumni functions. An Academy grad of 1979, ALO and later Liaison Officer Director (LOD) for the state of Michigan, has occasionally been seen wearing his “LCWB” hat.

At some point, no one seems to remember exactly when, the single Parents’ Club for Michigan split into two. Dividing the state directly down the middle from north to south produced the East Michigan Parents’ Club and the West Michigan Parents’ Club. No one remembers the exact reason why the club split either – perhaps because it was too far to travel to come to meetings and events, perhaps because those parents on the west side of the state felt their needs and interests were different than the more populated east side. A few years later a third club was formed for Northern Michigan parents. After a few years, not having

enough parents to support it, that Club eventually was absorbed again into the East & West Michigan Clubs. Two separate yet cooperative parent clubs exist to this day.

For many years, the All Academy Holiday Ball was held at the K of C Hall in Lincoln Park, generously arranged for by Don & Theresa Butella, Club Presidents in 1981 & 1982 (Don Butella Jr. USAFA 1982). In 2000, the Club opted to move the location to a more central hotel venue, hoping to encourage attendance by parents & cadets from across the state. Attendance increased with the more upscale location and in 2001, the Holiday Ball became an “international” event for the first time with the attendance of 11 cadets from the Royal Canadian Military Academy in Kingston, Ontario, invited by Presidents Robert & Linda Bailey (Robert, USAFA 2003) in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy.

In 2003, at the annual Alumni Pot Luck meeting, the Parents Club recognized Col Jack Morgan’s 40 years as an Academy Admissions Liaison Officer. He continues this work still today and will celebrate 50 years in 2012. At the same meeting, the Parents Club celebrated its 30th Anniversary and both founders, Betty Howey and Betty & James Huston were able to be present. Mrs. Howey has since passed away.



In 2006, then Presidents Jen & Dan Bell (Daniel, USAFA 2007 & Robert, USAFA 2012) organized the first golf outing fundraiser for the Parents Club. It took place at the Selfridge ANG Base Golf Course.

In 2008, the Parents Club recognized Col John Diller’s contributions over 35 years and celebrated his retirement. His enthusiasm and historical knowledge have been missed.

In 2008 the USAFA Parents’ Club of Eastern Michigan received a non-profit 501(c)3 determination. All donations are now tax deductible.

Attached is a list of parents who have served the Club as presidents over the past 39 years.

The USAFA Parents Club of Eastern Michigan will celebrate its 40th Anniversary in 2012.

United States Air Force Academy Parents Club of Eastern Michigan

Past Presidents

1972	Identified Co-Founder 1 st President Mrs. Betty Howey	Identified Co-Founder Betty & James Huston
1973	Dorothy & Bob Dohner	
1974	Nan & Joe Pruss	
1975	Pat & Walt Johnson	
1976	Mary & Bill Cichowski	
1977	Joanne Takai	
1978	Daisy & Jim Doran	
1979	Peggy & George Barbour	
1980 - 1981	Doris & Vic Gibbons	
1982 - 1983	Theresa & Don Butella	
1984 - 1985	Sonia & Sam Phillips	
1985 - 1986	Emily & Dick Daldine	
1986 - 1987	Mary (Spewock) & Richard Sands	
1987 - 1988	Marsha & Chuk Kleber	
1988 - 1989	Kris & Bob Wiltse	
1989 - 1998	Co-President	Co-president Pat Williams-Redmond
	Jonelle Robinson	
1990 - 1991	Sandie & Doug Dimeff	
1991 - 1992	Karen & Ken Wensel	
1992 - 1993	Sharon & Bill Tumisanski	
1993 - 1994	Rose & Jim Marquette	
1994 - 1995	Sandra & John Lamb	
1995 - 1996	Nora & Mark Peters	
1996 - 1997 & 1997 - 1998	Suzanne & Carl Jiovani	
1998	Kathleen & Dave Pulliam	
1998 - 1999 & 1999 - 2000	Nancy & Jim Cuddeback	
2000 - 2001	Barb & Will Hoffmeier	
2001 - 2002 & 2002 - 2003	Linda & Bob Bailey	
2003 - 2004	Pam & Chuck Laufle	
2004 - 2005	Cheryl & Todd Morell	
2005 - 2006	Jennifer & Dan Bell	
2006 - 2007	Phyllis & Tom Risdon	
2007 - 2008	Helena & Bob Arcand	
2008 - 2009	Judy & Tom Arkwright	
2009 - 2010	Cheryl & Greg Hillman	
2010 - 2011	Nancy & Dwigen Misra	
2011 - 2012	Kathy Herman	
2012 - 2013	Patrick and Marsha Ennis	
2013 - 2014	Ann and Joe Pasque	
2014 - 2015	Tim and Shannon McCarthy	