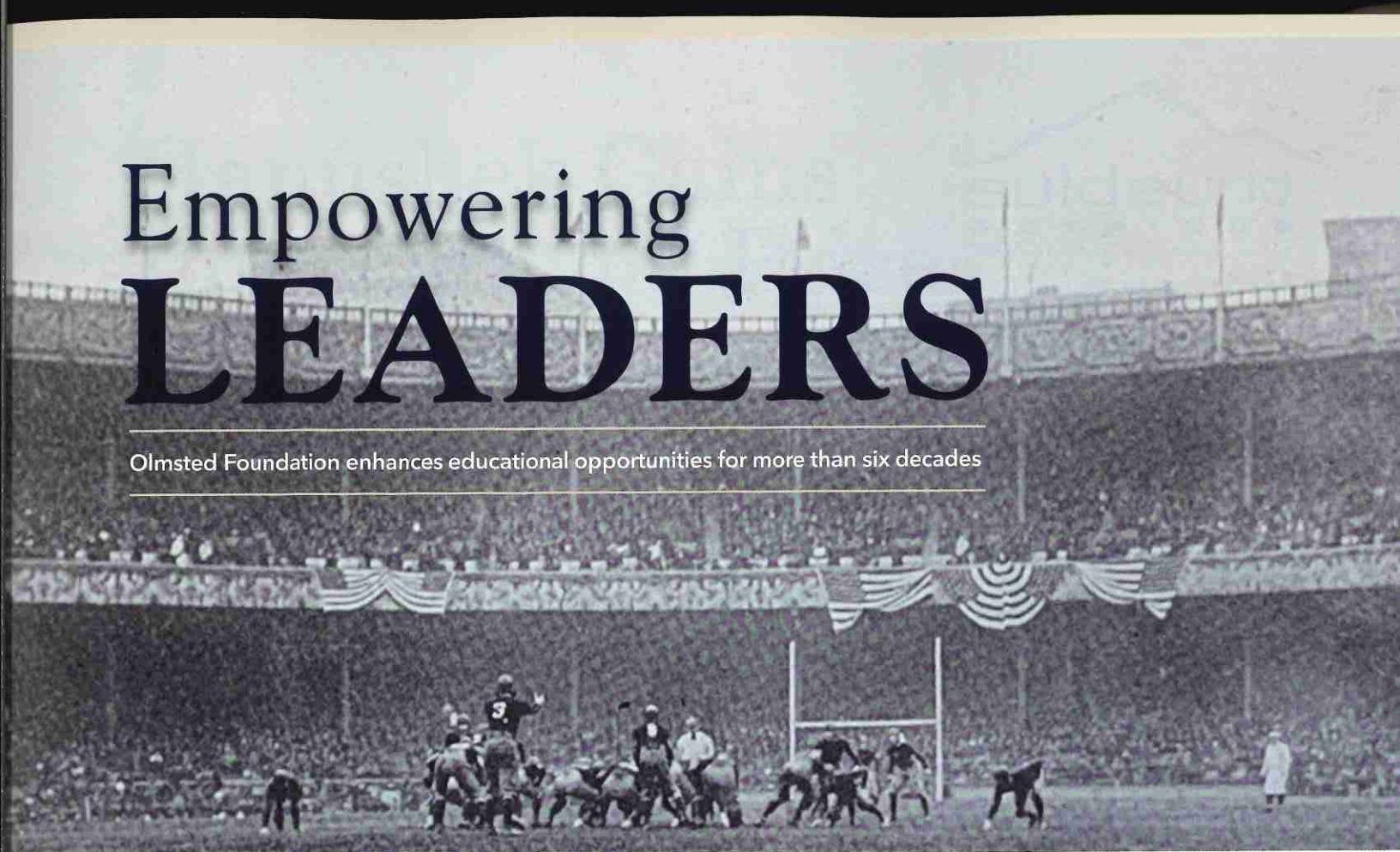


Empowering LEADERS

Olmsted Foundation enhances educational opportunities for more than six decades



By Col. (Ret.) Mark Elfendahl (USMA '89)
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On Nov. 26, 1921, the 24th Army-Navy Game took place at the Polo Grounds in New York City before a crowd of roughly 45,000 spectators. In attendance at the game were Vice President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, Secretary of War John W. Weeks, and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Robert E. Coontz.

Cadet First Captain and Regimental Commander George H. Olmsted, of Iowa, led the West Point Corps of Cadets as they marched onto the field that cold, rainy day. Likewise, his older brother, Jerauld L. Olmsted, who served as commander of the regiment at Annapolis, led his fellow midshipmen onto the field.

Their meeting 100 years ago on the “fields of friendly strife” was the only time in history that two brothers ever led their respective academies as they marched on to support their teams in the annual Army-Navy game.

The game itself was a long, hard, physical slog in the mud. Army, led by legendary

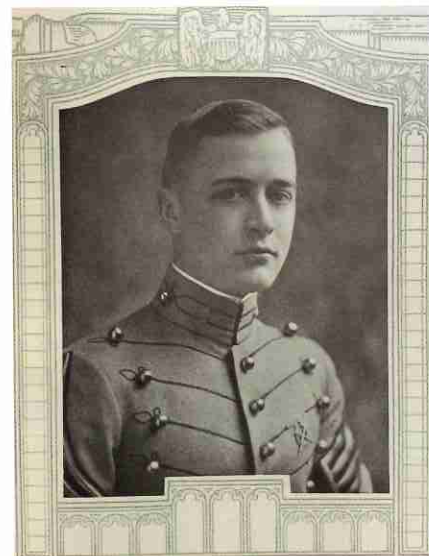
coach Charles Daly, hoped to use its speed to drive the ball in spurts and score touchdowns quickly.

But as various contemporary accounts of the game attest, it was Navy that proved the stronger team, leading Army in passes, yards gained, tackles and first downs. After a sustained defensive struggle, Navy found the end zone toward the close of the first half to take a one touchdown lead.

Army battled furiously throughout the second half, but the cadets were never able to score. In the end, Navy prevailed 7-0.

Although George and Jerauld Olmsted were both members of the Class of 1922, they were a year apart in age, with Jerauld the elder of the two. However, both had been selected as leaders of their respective schools in 1921, and for good reasons.

As a cadet, George Olmsted excelled in every endeavor he pursued. In addition to serving as cadet first captain, he graduated ranked second in his class, was elected class president three years in a row, managed the Army football team and was the featherweight boxing champion. He also served as the first chairman of the Cadet Honor Committee, which had been established



George H. Olmsted

by Superintendent Douglas MacArthur to provide a regulated process to govern enforcement of the Cadet Honor Code.

Jerauld Olmsted enjoyed an equal level of success at Annapolis. Not only did he serve as commander of what, at that time, was a Regiment of Midshipmen, he graduated

ranked first in his class academically, led and managed the soccer team, and served as editor-in-chief of the yearbook. Having spent a year in the Navy prior to arriving at Annapolis, he was also a trusted mentor and valued tutor to his grateful classmates.

1921 was a tumultuous year for cadets and midshipmen alike. All those who had entered West Point and Annapolis during the summer of 1918 had done so during the final year of World War I. With the country at war, these young men had been told their classes would graduate in three years to help bring new officers into the military more quickly.

However, after the armistice, and over the course of the ensuing two years, it became apparent that the Army would once again shrink rapidly and would not need so many officers so quickly. George Olmsted was named first captain by MacArthur at the beginning of his third year at West Point. His selection at that point in time was predicated on the belief that he and his classmates would all graduate in June of 1921.

But not long thereafter, Congress got involved and decided to return West Point and Annapolis to the four-year courses of instruction that had been the established norm. In another rare historical occurrence, George Olmsted and his classmates were given the option to graduate in three years or remain for the full four-year program.

Persuaded in large measure by the example of their class president, nearly every member

Top 10 Undergraduate Schools Producing Olmsted Scholars

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. U.S. Air Force Academy: 158 | 6. University of Notre Dame: 7 |
| 2. U.S. Naval Academy: 143 | 7. Georgetown University: 6 |
| 3. U.S. Military Academy: 142 | 8. The Citadel: 6 |
| 4. Cornell University: 10 | 9. Virginia Military Institute: 5 |
| 5. University of Virginia: 8 | 10. U.S. Coast Guard Academy: 5 |

of what then became the West Point Class of 1922 decided to remain at the academy for their fourth year. Consequently, George Olmsted's tenure as first captain was extended by MacArthur into the 1921-22 academic year, thus making him the only cadet first captain who served in that position for a period longer than one academic year.

George and Jerauld Olmsted would go on to win significant notoriety at the time of their near simultaneous graduations from West Point and Annapolis. *The New York Times* published a large, two-page spread showcasing the graduation ceremonies and highlighting the fact that both brothers had been selected and served as the top leaders of their respective academies.

Tragically, just a year after graduating from Annapolis, Jerauld died suddenly of an unknown illness, believed to have been polio or spinal meningitis. Jerauld's death spurred George to leave active duty and return to Iowa to support his father and the growing family insurance business.

Over the following 20 years, George built a network of insurance companies and banks throughout the central parts of the United States that thrived and survived throughout the Great Depression and into the 1940s.

George was recalled to active duty in World War II, during which he served once again under Douglas MacArthur, this time in the China Theater of Operations. During his service in China, George became convinced that the greatest American military leaders must be educated broadly. After serving once again during the Korean War, George returned permanently to civilian life and expanded his very successful banking and insurance conglomerate on the international level.

In 1959, George Olmsted established The Olmsted Foundation and endowed the Olmsted Scholar Program to provide outstanding young military leaders an opportunity to learn a foreign language, pursue graduate studies overseas, and acquire an in-depth understanding of foreign cultures to better equip them to serve as senior leaders in the armed forces.

Since then, a total of 727 military officers have been selected as Olmsted Scholars, including 158 graduates of the U.S. Air Force Academy. Indeed, the Air Force Academy has produced a greater number of Olmsted Scholars than any other undergraduate institution in America, including both West Point and Annapolis.

USAFA graduates selected as Olmsted Scholars are memorialized on the large blue and silver perpetual plaque that hangs inside Fairchild Hall on the grounds of the Academy.

George Olmsted later became a major benefactor to the nation's service academies. Starting in 2001, the Olmsted Foundation began an overseas travel and cultural immersion program for cadets at the Air Force Academy. The foundation also sponsors the USAFA Academy Assembly, the major foreign affairs conference that takes place each fall at the Academy.

Looking back today — a century removed from this unique and historic football game — the legacies of George and Jerauld Olmsted can still be felt by cadets, midshipmen and service academy alumni alike. It is a legacy of service. It is a legacy of excellence and achievement. But certainly in George's case, perhaps most of all it is a legacy of leadership and generosity to the nation he loved so well. 🇺🇸



Jerauld Olmsted