

2021

ARMY-NAVY GAME

MARKS CENTENNIAL OF HISTORIC OLMSTED BROTHERS MEETING

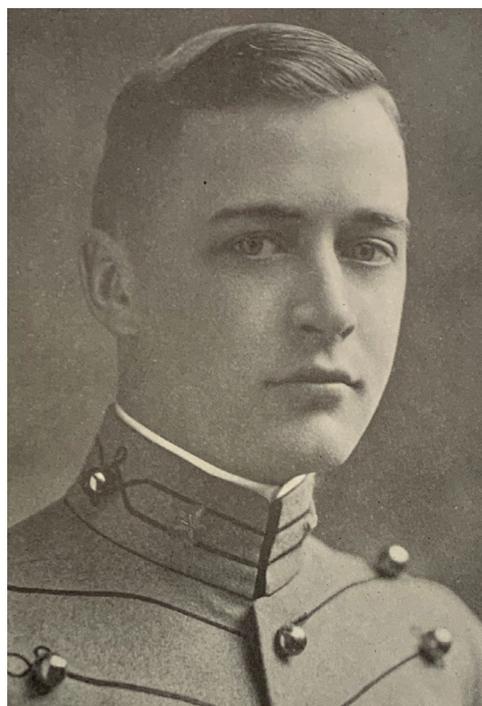
By Colonel Mark B. Elfendahl, USA (Ret.)

On 26 November 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 were Vice President and Mrs. 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 regimental commander, then the highest ranking midshipman at the Naval Academy, 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 quickly. But as 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 was never able to score. In the end, Navy prevailed 7-0 and took an overall lead in the series with 12 wins to 11 for Army, with one tie.

Although George and Jerauld Olmsted were both members of the Class of 1922, they were a year apart in age. Both had been selected as leaders of their respective schools, 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 established by



George H. Olmsted, 1922 *Howitzer*



Jerauld L. Olmsted, 1922 *Lucky Bag*

Superintendent Douglas MacArthur. Above all, he was always a truly selfless and admired friend.

Jerauld Olmsted enjoyed equal success as a midshipman at Annapolis. Not only did he serve as commander of what, at the 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 *Lucky Bag*. 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.

Tragically, just a year after graduating 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 family insurance business. Over the following 20 years, George built a growing network of insurance companies and banks throughout the central parts of the United States that thrived and survived the Great Depression.

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 140 graduates of the Naval Academy.

Looking back today—a century removed from this unique and historic game—the legacies of George and Jerauld Olmsted can still be felt by midshipmen, cadets, academy alumni and anyone else who attends or even watches this year's Army-Navy game. It is a legacy of service. It is a legacy of excellence and achievement. But perhaps most of all, it is a legacy of leadership. ⚓

Colonel Elfendahl is executive vice president of The Olmsted Foundation, was a member of the Olmsted Scholar Class of 1999 and studied at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany.



The 2021 Army-Navy Football game takes place on Saturday, 11 December at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ.



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