



# THE OLMSTED FOUNDATION

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## West Point Museum Unveils Olmsted Display

On November 13, 2023 leaders from the US Military Academy and the Olmsted Foundation celebrated the opening of a new display in the foyer of the West Point Museum honoring MG (Ret.) George Olmsted, the principal benefactor of the museum.

Mr. David Reel, Director of the West Point museum, welcomed BG Shane Reeves, Dean of the Academic Board, Olmsted Foundation President and CEO MG (Ret.) Bruce K. Scott, COL (Ret.) Mark Bieger, President & CEO of the West Point Association of Graduates, and other guests for the ceremony, which was followed by refreshments.



MG (Ret.) Bruce Scott cuts the ribbon at the George Olmsted display in the West Point Museum.

With financial support from the Olmsted Museum Endowment, the West Point Museum now has a permanent foyer display honoring General Olmsted. The display includes General Olmsted's original helmet liner, his USMA diploma, a bronze bust of the general, and a narrative biography of his life. The helmet liner is on loan from the Olmsted Foundation.



Located in Olmsted Hall, the West Point Museum now displays several artifacts honoring General George Olmsted.

It has long been an objective of the Olmsted Foundation to provide proper recognition of George Olmsted as the benefactor of the West Point Museum. The recent celebration of the centennial of George Olmsted's graduation from West Point provided new impetus to making this a reality. Olmsted Hall, the building that houses the museum, was dedicated personally by George Olmsted in 1986 after he donated funds needed to move the museum to its current location. General Olmsted also provided a perpetual endowment to support the museum.

## Kosinski to Speak at DC Area Scholar Assembly

Air Force Lt Gen Leo Kosinski (OSC 00, Tokyo) will be the featured speaker at this year's DC Area Spring Assembly of Scholars, which will be held at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA on April 16th.

Lt Gen Kosinski is the Director of Logistics (J4) on the Joint Staff. He is a graduate of the US Air Force Academy, and holds several Master's degrees, including a Master in Business Administration earned as an Olmsted Scholar at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo. He is also a command pilot with over 3,300 hours in multiple aircraft, including the C-5, C-12J, C-17, and the KC-135.

The assembly will include a luncheon, updates from the Foundation staff, and General Kosinski's remarks. All Scholars and spouses in the greater Washington, DC area are encouraged to attend this event. Invitations will be sent out in March.



Lt Gen Leo Kosinski (OSC 00, Tokyo).

## Chairman's Corner



As we turn the corner into 2024, it looks like we are in for a very busy year! Current events constantly remind me of how important our program is to our long-term national security.

The United States of America is indeed an indispensable nation, but we have so many challenges, international and domestic, we can no longer go it alone. Partners and allies figure prominently in the preservation of our freedom and democratic principles. In 40 years of active duty, I don't think I have ever seen so many threats looming on the horizon. As the war in Ukraine enters its third year, a new assault on democracy has opened in the Middle East, sparked by horrific attacks by Hamas on Israel, which threatens to become a broader, regional war. On the other side of the world, we watch with interest as China assesses the election of a pro-independence party in Taiwan.

During my many assignments in NATO, I was often reminded by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the power of the three "Ds"—Deter, Defend, and Dialog. The latter "D" is just as important as the first two, and that's where each and every one of you come in. As I peruse my copy of "Soldier, Patriot, Financier" (the only biography of Major General Olmsted, by Howard Dutkin in 1971), I found the following excerpts compelling:

**"Upon completion of this unique educational experience, the military services may find opportunities for immediate utilization of Olmsted Scholars in assignments for which they will be peculiarly qualified. Also, ...this experience will be found useful for the more distant future, when they may be assigned as commanders, or staff officers of U. S. or multinational forces in foreign countries, or as military advisors there. While it may be particularly desirable to have them serve in the country in which they lived and studied, wherever they may be assigned they will benefit from the broadening influence of their residence study and travel aboard."**

I couldn't agree more. The Olmsted experience will serve you and our great nation well. Make the most of it and use the skills you acquire to keep America and our Allies safe.

Fair winds and following seas!

*James G. Foggo  
Admiral, US Navy (Ret.)  
Chairman of the Board*

## President's Perspective



As the chairman has highlighted above, the United States is indeed an indispensable nation, not only because it remains a beacon for the rest of the world, but also because its economy drives the world's economy and its military deters adversaries and terrorists all around the globe.

The benefits of the Olmsted Experience to Scholars and their Services are often not immediately evident in follow-on assignments right after completion of the program. Rather, it is upon promotion to senior leader ranks and while serving in positions of great responsibility when the unique "insider knowledge" of this program typically pays the greatest dividends.

The Foundation Staff has spent the last 98 days interviewing this year's Scholar finalists nominated by all six uniformed Services. Given the careful consideration we give each finalist, we can only

interview, at most, two per day. As a result, it takes over three months to complete this annual journey. Still, the period we devote to these outstanding young officers stationed all around the world is my favorite time of year. Why? Because it reaffirms my faith in the next generation of young military leaders who are rising through the ranks as junior officers. Just as important, it reaffirms that General Olmsted's vision of "broadly educated military leaders" remains as important to our country as ever.

So, every year from early November through early February, the Staff is fully engaged in what truly is the most important work we do: Interviewing, assessing, and helping select the next class of Olmsted Scholars to serve in and lead our Armed Forces in the future. And I have great reason for optimism: they have never failed us yet!

*Bruce K. Scott  
Major General, US Army (Ret.)  
President & CEO*

## Denaro Nominated for Promotion to Brigadier General



Col Brian Denaro (OSC 06, Guangzhou).

Space Force Col Brian Denaro (OSC 06, Guangzhou) has been nominated by President Biden for promotion to the rank of Brigadier General. Col Denaro currently serves as the Senior Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of the Air Force. His previous assignment was as the Program Executive Officer for Space Sensing in Space Systems Command at Los Angeles Air Force Base.

Col Denaro is a 2000 graduate of the Air Force Academy. He earned an MBA at Sun Yat-Sen University while an Olmsted Scholar in Guangzhou, where he received the top thesis award. Denaro also earned a Master of Science in National Security Strategy at National War College.

Last year, Denaro was awarded the Lt Gen John W. O'Neill Award by the Air and Space Forces Association for his contributions as a senior leader.

## Maj Gen (Ret.) Peter D. Robinson Remembered

The following tribute to the recently deceased Peter Robinson (OSC 68, Freiburg) was received from Col (Ret.) Gary Van Valin (OSC 72, Konstanz) -Ed.

We met when we were 17 years-old kids, freshmen, right out of high school at USAFA. We were all smart, but Pete was different, he was scary brilliant. Pete finished number one in our class in academics and general order of merit. Pete knew what he wanted to do: get married to Pat Clements, who was at CU. They were a match, both scary smart.

Pete attended UPT at Webb and got an F-100 assignment. He got a European tour at Hahn Air Base, Germany flying the Hun. He survived a three-year tour as a novice fighter pilot, then volunteered for Vietnam flying 325 combat missions in the F-100 in 1967. He returned to the U.S. and prepared for his second European tour by attending the Defense Language Institute. He received a prestigious Olmsted Scholarship and studied at the University of Freiburg in mathematics, speaking, writing and testing in German.

Always a fighter pilot, Pete returned to Southeast Asia for a second tour in Thailand flying the F-4, followed by staff assignments in the Pentagon, back to Holloman AFB flying the F-15, and back to Europe attending the British Senior War College in London, followed by a tour at USAFE headquarters, and finally an assignment as Commander of the F-15 Wing at Bitburg Airbase, Germany. At Bitburg, Pete and Pat received the Gen and Mrs. Jerome F. O'Malley Award as the outstanding spouse team in a key leadership position. Pete left Germany and became commander of the 313<sup>th</sup> Air Division in PACAF at Kadena, still flying the F-15.

Pete retired as commander of the Air War College and settled in Albuquerque where he consulted and participated in numerous civic activities.

I remember Pete's intellect, but more than that, I remember his character. He was a joy to be around, but never mentioned his many accomplishments. He was just a good, kind, interesting friend. When visiting, we talked about his worldwide assignments, travel to exotic places and his two successful children: Eric, a research librarian and Kristen Robinson, a physician. He could discuss anything—world events, politics and old times. I believe we will meet again and laugh and talk about flying and squadron beer calls and German wine and USAFA classes and dating our wives. God needed a great fighter pilot and He got a good one. We miss you, Pete.



## SAVE THE DATE

**The 2024 Olmsted Foundation Annual Meeting, Reunion and Dinner will be held on June 1<sup>st</sup> at Anderson House**

# Scholar Shares Experience in Jerusalem

by Dan Cohoon (OSC 22, Jerusalem)

The morning of 7 October was a particularly peaceful *Shabbat*. The regular bells from the light rail and car horns were replaced with singing birds and the light, fall breeze rustling the few drying leaves that procrastinated in falling from their perches. Signs of *Sukkot* still dotted the balconies of adjacent apartment buildings at the culmination of the week-long Harvest Festival, and the promise of a final summer trip and a new academic year loomed after the last week of summer break. An air raid siren pierced the still of the morning, and with it, the calm that had characterized my previous year and a half in Israel.



This view of Zion Square in Jerusalem with menorahs in the foreground and police in the background captures the zeitgeist.

more times than I ever expected to hear in such a mixed city, with Arabs, Israelis, Christians, Muslims, Jews, immigrants, tourists, and locals all interspersed throughout.

I had a trip planned to England departing the evening of the 7th out of Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. With embassy approval, I ordered a cab to take me to the airport. My driver was born and raised in East Jerusalem, and he expressed concern about driving home after dark; he feared indiscriminate retaliation when people learned about the nature of the terror attacks after the end of *Shabbat*. It was a powerful reminder of the human side of the conflict, and how easily anger can be misdirected in trying times. This point remains poignant three months into the war. The human cost has been staggering, and I hope and pray for a swift end to the hostilities. After a quick bunker dive in the terminal, my flight departed without incident on the evening of the 7th.

Jerusalem has largely returned to normal, with only occasional sirens and Iron Dome engagements. Although the start of the academic year was delayed until January 1st, life largely continued as it had before the 7 October attacks. While the air is still tense, people go about their daily lives, shops and public transportation are open, and Israeli society perseveres, in stark contrast to what is happening just 60 miles west as Operation IRON SWORD continues into the southern half of the Gaza strip. The most notable difference I feel is the absence of many of my classmates who are still serving in the reserves. War and conflict are so central to Israeli culture that the people have learned to carry on through the tough times. This perspective and tenacity are admirable, and something I hope to carry with me after I finish my studies this summer. Although the circumstances are horrific, I am very grateful for the opportunity to experience Israeli culture at such a deep level. Hopefully, the hostilities conclude soon; but in the meantime, I am in awe of the Israeli spirit and look forward to completing my studies in true, local fashion.

The Israelis perform regular tests on their air raid sirens, so it was not the first time I had heard them. But there was something different this time. I am fortunate to have a secure room in my apartment, so I quickly made my way into my multi-purpose office/storage room/*miklat*, shut the solid metal plate that covers the single window, and closed the door to wait. The siren lasted less than a minute, and things seemed to return to normal. I went on with my morning, putting the finishing touches on a final seminar paper still lingering from the first semester. The second siren was perhaps more jarring than the first. I went back to the *miklat*, and this time I both heard and felt explosions. It was clear that this was not an ordinary attack. Over the course of the morning, the sirens in Jerusalem sounded six or seven times, six or seven

# The Olmsted Experience in Wartime Tel Aviv

by James Talisse (OSC 23, Tel Aviv)



James Talisse picking peppers at an Israeli farm..

October 7th, 2023. This is a date that will live in infamy in Israel. Sometimes referred to as simply “The Black *Shabbat*,” it was the bloodiest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. The terrible violence and ensuing war found me at the very beginning of my time overseas for my Olmsted Experience in Tel Aviv. The attack happened two months after I arrived in country and about a week before the start of the academic semester. The academic semester was delayed a number of times, eventually starting on December 31st. I suddenly found myself living a very different Olmsted Experience from what I had envisioned. Instead of being in the modern, lively, beachfront, party atmosphere of cosmopolitan Tel Aviv with plentiful opportunities to travel within the varied landscapes of the country and regionally, I found myself in a city where almost everything was closed. Domestic and international travel was severely limited and the daily routine was pockmarked by sirens warning of incoming rocket fire and a subsequent scurry to the closest bomb shelter.

As a result, I was in a position of deep uncertainty, unsure even if I would be allowed to stay and complete my time in Israel. The beginning of the war was very tense, but as the situation stabilized, I realized not only that I would be able to stay in Israel for now, but also that I had a couple of months before classes would start. I searched for ways to utilize this time while remaining aware and involved in the tense yet mourning community. I began volunteering at farms in southern Israel alongside other students and staff members from Tel Aviv University. In light of the events unfolding in Israel, many of the mostly foreign farm workers were urged by their governments to return home. In addition, tragically, a number of these workers are counted among the victims or hostages of the October 7th onslaught.

During my first volunteering experience, I recall driving for nearly two hours from the TAU campus and passing by several small *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* in southern Israel. These places had become household names after the events of October 7th. The scars of the tragic events were still fresh and very real in these areas. A few hours into my first-ever agricultural experience, picking lettuce under the Negev Desert’s scorching sun, the head farmer called all the volunteers together – a group of about 20 of us – and handed us cups with a mixture of *Arak* (a Levantine, anise-based liquor) and lemonade. He then proceeded to give an impromptu speech.

What follows are some excerpts (my translation) of that speech.:

“...7th of October. *Shabbat*. We woke up here at 6:30 just like any other pastoral morning here in the Negev. Ten minutes later we see videos of terrorists entering Sderot (a nearby city). I went out with this small pistol and within a few minutes we heard shouts, gun shots and saw pickup trucks full of terrorists arriving. Let me tell you, I am no hero, but within a few minutes they fled. They ran away....

...My best friend, my brother, would always bring *Arak* with lemonade to any gathering we had. It didn’t matter what the event was, how small it was, grilling out, playing soccer in the field. Always *Arak* with lemonade. Always with a smile. If we can raise this glass in his memory. He was murdered on the 7th of October...

... [choking back tears] I have to tell you, without you here, without your help, without you picking lettuce, it just wouldn’t get done. It’s not like it would get done later or more slowly. It simply wouldn’t get done. I can’t tell you much I appreciate you all. Huge thanks, huge, huge thanks...”

Back in early November, I volunteered for the first time. Many things have changed since then. Everyday life has almost entirely returned to Tel Aviv, and I have started my first semester of studies with many restrictions lifted. I continue to volunteer at least once a week. So far, I’ve picked and/or planted lettuce, tomatoes, pineapples, bell peppers, strawberries and more – and receive heartfelt gratitude every time. While this may not have been the Olmsted Experience that I expected, my time in Israel has been poignant and transformative. I have a deep sense of sadness about the loss of innocent lives, and I am still trying to comprehend the depth of grief felt by this trauma-stricken nation.

## Air Force Academy holds 65th Academy Assembly

This past November, the Air Force Academy held its 65th Academy Assembly. This year's topic was *The Dragon Roars Back: China's Return To The World Stage*. The Olmsted Foundation is one of the sponsors of this annual event.

The Foundation's Air Force Active Duty Director, Col Mike Polidor (OSC 16, Kaohsiung), represented the Foundation at the Assembly. Col Polidor gave a presentation on the Olmsted Scholar Program to about 150 cadets and underclass delegates. Based on the questions and interactions, he is confident the cadets in the audience now have a baseline idea of the program and see it as a great opportunity. He also spoke in a smaller setting to cadets studying Chinese, not only about the program but also undergraduate travel opportunities provided by the Olmsted Foundation and the opportunities they have post-graduation.

Air Force Lt Gen Leo Kosinski (OSC 00, Tokyo) was also present at the Assembly and spoke to students studying Japanese. Lt Gen Kosinski discussed the impact of studying as a Scholar, the opportunities afforded by the Olmsted Foundation, and how that has shaped his career.



Lt Gen Leo Kosinski (OSC 00, Tokyo) speaks to Japanese language students at the Air Force Academy.

## Olmsted Scholar Promotions and Selections

**Nominated by the President for promotion to Brigadier General in US Space Force:**

- ◆ Col Brian Denaro (OSC 06, Guangzhou)

**Selected for Brigade Level Command by the US Army:**

- ◆ COL Walter Reed (OSC 12, Cadiz)
- ◆ COL Kenneth Wainwright (OSC 12, Jerusalem)

**Selected for Battalion Level Command by the US Army:**

- ◆ LTC Caleb Ling (OSC 16, Chiang Mai) (Primary)
- ◆ LTC John Kline (OSC 17, Madrid) (Primary)
- ◆ LTC Jennifer Purser (OSC 17, Brno) (Primary)
- ◆ MAJ Walter Biner (OSC 18, Stockholm) (Primary)
  
- ◆ LTC James Vansandt (OSC 16, Louvain) (Alternate)
- ◆ LTC Jeffrey Agnew (OSC 17, Hangzhou) (Alternate)

**Selected for Major Command by the US Navy:**

- ◆ CDR Will Carr (OSC 07, Kyoto)

**Selected for Commander Command by the US Navy:**

- ◆ LCDR Fred Hendricks (OSC 17, Kyoto)
- ◆ LCDR David Elsenbeck (OSC 22, Madrid)

## Foggo Visits NATO School



ADM (Ret.) Jamie Foggo (OSC 87, Strasbourg) met with NATO School Commandant COL Jay Smith (OSC 06, Aix-en-Provence) during a recent visit to the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany. The Foundation is currently promoting the NATO School, Oberammergau, as an internship opportunity for service academy cadets and midshipmen.

## Still Traveling Like an Olmsted Scholar

by Shannon McClain (OSC 04, Riga)



Shannon McClain, Megan Hallinan and Isaiah McClain at the *Fontana dell'Acqua Paola* in Rome, Italy.

It's hard to say what was the best part of being an Olmsted Scholar, but high on the list was visiting my fellow Scholars and having them visit me. There is nothing like tour advice - and often guiding - by someone who lives in the country and speaks the language. Most important, it is so good to connect with someone who really understands what you are going through as a graduate student in a foreign country. As the years have passed - I started my language training 20 years ago this fall (yikes) - I have missed meeting and visiting with my peers in a foreign world, meeting their friends and getting their perspectives.

Now that my family and I have entered the second half of our tour in Accra, Ghana, I'm happy to say that I've been able to recreate a little bit of that Olmsted magic. During this year, I've been able to trade visits with Megan Hallinan (OSC 10, Dakar). Megan and I are both Navy scholars who did our Olmsted tours as single lieutenants in countries where scholars had either never been (Latvia) or hadn't been in several years (Senegal). We met years ago, first in a barely remembered orientation meeting and later at the Joint Women's Leadership Symposium in Washington shortly after she completed her Olmsted tour. We had kept in tenuous

contact following each other's exploits on social media and through the Christmas newsletters.

When I mentioned our posting in Accra in last year's Christmas letter, Megan reached out to compare West African experiences and relive some Olmsted stories. Shortly after, I saw an opportunity to take our youngest son to Rome, where Megan was stationed, for his mid-term break.

I reached out to Megan for local travel advice. Being in Rome with everyone likely to want to visit her, she sent me her comprehensive guide to the city. I liked it so much, I used it as a template for those wanting to visit Accra. Because of her advice, our trip to Rome was a huge success—lots of history and culture for me, plenty of activities to satisfy a 10-year-old child, and some amazing food for both of us. Luckily, Megan's schedule allowed for a few truly Roman meals together and a night driving tour of Rome. We were able to talk about the world and the Scholar program, and I planted the seed for Megan's return to West Africa.

Later in the Spring, she reached out and asked, "Did you mean it when you said we could stay with you in Accra?" Of course I did, and I said so - attaching to an email my newly created travel advice document along with our known plans .

I can't tell you how great it was to have Megan in Ghana for a week and share my city and a little of my host country. She managed quite a lot in that short time with a good mix of the country's natural beauty, it's rich cultural traditions, and its difficult place in the history of both colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade.

For me, the best part was, once again, sharing perspectives and getting a chance to see a place through someone else's eyes. It was especially good to share this with Megan, who could compare and contrast it with her own experiences in Dakar.

I have often said that the people who understand me the best or with whom I can most easily connect are my fellow Olmsted Scholars and people who have the qualities of an Olmsted Scholar. Those connections don't end when our Olmsted Experience ends. So, if you find yourself with an opportunity to visit Ghana, Togo or Benin, reach out, and I will share my travel advice and be happy to host you for at least a dinner.



Megan Hallinan and Shannon McClain in front of the flag of Ghana.

## Foundation and Scholars in the News

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The George and Carol Olmsted Foundation  
80 East Jefferson Street, Suite 300B  
Fall Church, VA 22046



[www.olmstedfoundation.org](http://www.olmstedfoundation.org)