GUIDON

OMA ALUMNI REUNION 2014
A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

FALL 2014

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI OF THE OKLAHOMA MILITARY ACADEMY
The 2014 OMA Alumni reunion is now a memory, but what a memory it was! For those of you who attended and had the enjoyment of viewing the premiere of the made-for-TV documentary “Oklahoma Military Academy: West Point of the Southwest,” you watched 55 minutes of the legacy and history of an institution that we all called home at one time. While we did not show the five “bonus clips” dating from 1928 up until 1968, each one is a singular treat and can be viewed with your purchase of the documentary.

Following the Reunion, I initiated a questionnaire asking each of you to tell us how we can improve the Alumni Association and how we can make the Reunion better. If you haven’t been back, what can we do to get you back as every single OMA alumni is important to us. If you haven’t sent this form back, I ask you to please do so.

It seems that we all still have many of the same sentiments, memories, stories and feelings about our time on “The Hill”, no matter when we attended. And why is that? Because “Once a Cadet, Always a Cadet!”

I would urge each and every one of you to put down on your calendar the OMA Alumni Reunion on June 5-6, 2015. Don’t wait until it is too late and you can’t enjoy seeing your fellow cadets at the Reunion. Get your buddies back up here while you still can, as our ranks are getting fewer each year. If OMA made a difference in your life—even a small difference—make it your MISSION to come back to this upcoming reunion and bring someone who has never attended before.

Finally, your Board of Directors intends to listen to YOU. Tell us how we can improve and what it will take to get YOU back to the Hill – not just next year but EVERY year! One thing that we have heard loud and clear is spending more time with your buddies…. you can count on it!

If you would like to contact me personally, please feel free to e-mail me at: phil.goldfarb@cox.net. Tell me what is on your mind and I promise you a prompt reply.

Phil Goldfarb ’69
OMA Alumni Association President
WHAT IS AN OMA ALUMNUS?

There have been questions in the past on just what constitutes an OMA alumnus. Did one have to graduate high school or junior college to be considered an alumnus? Could a cadet who only went to OMA for one year or even one semester join the OMA Alumni Association? Can an OMA Alumni be a day student or did they have to live on campus? Let’s clarify this once and for all!

The answer is in the by-laws of the OMA Alumni Association. Article III, Section 1 states that “All graduates and former students of OMA that completed one semester and left in good standing shall be considered alumni and members of the association.”

This means that if one completed a semester of a rabbit period and were “recognized” as a cadet, they are eligible to be members of the OMA Alumni Association. Both day students and cadets who lived on campus are certainly both eligible; one does not need to have graduated. Also for the record, the rabbit period was an entire year until 1945 when it was changed to a single semester!

Since the school closed in 1971, there have been no more OMA cadets. The youngest cadet in 1971 who was a high school freshman is now 58 years old. The average age of an OMA alumnus is estimated to be around 75. We are still looking for some “lost” OMA alumni, so please check out the OMA website (www.rsu.edu/oma/lostalumni.asp) for a current list of lost cadets. We need your help in finding them! Finally, if you would like to “connect” with a former cadet, please contact Dr. Danette Boyle, Executive Director OMA Alumni Association, at dboyle@rsu.edu or 918-343-6888 to let the Alumni Association know, and we will try to find them for you!

The best place to meet and to interact with fellow OMA Alumni is the 2015 Reunion. We hope to see you there!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Please accept my sincere thanks and appreciation to all OMA Alumni, family and friends who attended the 2014 OMA Alumni Reunion in June. Based on all the comments at the reunion and after, it was probably the best yet. We had nearly 200 alumni and an additional 175 family members and friends attending. We had more than 70 alumni who traveled from out of state; truly these cadets exemplified Courage, Loyalty and Honor!

The premiere of the OMA Documentary, Oklahoma Military Academy: West Point of the Southwest was the highlight of the reunion. We had three huge television screens with the finest technical equipment, and I promise you there was not a sound heard or a muscle moved during the showing of the film. There were parts that made people laugh, but mostly tears filled the eyes of everyone in the ballroom. I love this documentary and watch it as often as I like, and so can you. Please contact me to order a copy.

I want to thank our own Shawnee Brittan, ’53 for serving as the producer/director and our three co-producers, Joanna M. Champlin, Bryan Crain, and Tim Yoder. They all did a marvelous job. The executive producer was Royal Aills, general manager of RSU Public Television. Royal truly did some wonderful work in his leadership of the production team, and my forever friend, John Wooley, wrote a beautiful script for the documentary.

While I’ll always have fond memories of this year’s reunion, I have already been working on our 2015 reunion. Are you ready to know about one of the best things to happen on “The Hill?” I am beyond excited to tell you that we now have: BOOTS BACK ON THE HILL!

That’s right; we have students in uniform right now on campus. We have officially started the Oklahoma Army National Guard’s Guard Officer Leadership Development (GOLD) program, and we have eight students for our very first semester. We will have more students joining us in January. We have been assigned CPT Michael Mitchell and SSG R. Wayne Guevara from the Oklahoma National Guard to head the program. You can read more about this on page 7 of this newsletter.

I recently had the honor and privilege of meeting the students in our GOLD Program. There are seven young men and one young lady. It was very emotional for me because, as you know, I have worked with RSU President Larry Rice and many of you to get this program started. We will have many of our uniform-clad students joining us for the OMA Alumni Reunion on June 5 and 6, 2015. Come meet these young people who will make you proud, and share memories of your own days at OMA.

With All Good Thoughts,
Danette Boyle
Executive Director, OMA Alumni Association
Hill.” We attend the annual reunions to visit with other alumni who share our memories of day-to-day living at OMA—and who share our love for OMA. As many of us have said, “Once a cadet, always a cadet!”

The 2014 OMA Alumni Reunion was like none other with nearly a year’s work and funds raised to make it possible for the premiere showing of the OMA documentary, “Oklahoma Military Academy: West Point of the Southwest.”

The Saturday luncheon was one of the largest in attendance in many years, but what followed was the most unbelievable happening at an OMA Alumni Reunion ever. Lunch was over and the tables were cleared. The lights went down, the curtains closed and three huge TV screens were ready to go.

The OMA documentary blasted the Centennial Center with picture and sound. The story of OMA in this year

You could describe the 2014 OMA Alumni Reunion held in June as Awesome, Incredible, Fabulous, Extraordinary and you could say it was the “Best Ever”—and you would be absolutely correct!

You will read in this Guidon about the huge number of alumni, family and guests who attended the reunion with more than 70 alumni driving or flying in from out of state. You will read about the extraordinary alumni chosen to receive the Distinguished Alumni and Hall of Fame awards.

All of these things together help make a great reunion; however if you were able to identify and use the best words in the English language to describe the 2014 OMA Alumni Reunion, you would still fall short. There is no way to describe the emotional feelings of the OMA Alumni this year.

We ask ourselves, “Why?” We all know that as we get older, many of us feel a strong need to reconnect to “The Hill.” We attend the annual reunions to visit with other alumni who share our memories of day-to-day living at OMA—and who share our love for OMA. As many of us have said, “Once a cadet, always a cadet!”

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documentary was powerful and very emotional. From the beginnings of OMA in 1919 with cadets living in tents to the final lowering of the flag in May 1971, this film was extraordinary. The interviews of many cadets were just as powerful and emotional. As one alumnus commented, “I started crying and I looked around and nearly all the 350 alumni, family members and friends were crying or had tears in their eyes. It was truly an experience I have never had in my entire life and it was at that moment that I pledged to myself I would never miss another reunion.”

There is only one way to truly have experienced this year’s reunion and that was to be present and see the OMA documentary on the big screen. It was beyond describing to watch the beautiful story of OMA. There were some very funny stories, and some serious accountings of the history of OMA—everything from the Rabbit Semester to going on bivouac. There were more tears and hugs and shouts and loud clapping than imaginable.

Everyone in attendance will never forget the feelings that came over all of us as we watched the OMA documentary. Those who were unable to attend may be able to experience a little of the feeling the alumni had that attended this reunion as you read the personal testimonies featured throughout this Guidon from several alumni after the reunion and particularly after they saw the OMA Documentary.

“The 2014 OMA Alumni Reunion was the best one we ever had. I loved seeing the Premiere of the OMA Documentary.”
– Jack Harris ’55
“Words cannot describe how much I enjoyed the OMA Alumni Reunion and seeing the premiere of the OMA Documentary, ‘Oklahoma Military Academy: West Point of the Southwest.’ After I returned home from the Reunion, I watched the DVD again. I can hardly believe I was part of something magnificent. I felt like I was coming home. All my boyhood friends were at the Reunion, some physically and some in spirit. As I think back over the years I was at OMA, I have such great memories … my mind was racing all during the Reunion putting names with faces and trying to remember as many as possible. I was just overwhelmed and very emotional. … I don’t know what I was expecting, but it turned out to be magical. I am so glad I came back to the ‘The Hill.’ “

– First time OMA Alumni Reunion Attendee, Bill Shaffer ’65
Decades ago, the Oklahoma Military Academy enjoyed a hard-earned reputation for excellence, becoming known as the “West Point of the Southwest.” Life on “The Hill” for an OMA cadet was one of discipline and self-control. The school’s core values – Courage, Loyalty and Honor – were instilled in the life of every cadet.

The documentary features the narration of national award-winning journalist Bill Kurtis and was written by author John Wooley, who has extensively researched OMA’s history. OMA alumnus Shawnee Brittan ’53, who has received more than 40 international film awards, served as the producer/director.

“I just received my copy of your Documentary DVD about the history of OMA. I must admit I learned more about the school and it brought back many memories. Honestly, I had tears in my eyes because I will never be able to return to OMA, a place that took a troubled kid in 1969 and made him into a man. I loved the DVD and saw people I remember so well. “The Hill” was my second home all the time I was a student there. I hated it at first, but like so many other cadets, I grew up and it made me a man, who served in Vietnam, Korea, West and East Germany.”
– James P. Adams ’71

Call Danette Boyle to order your copy today!
918-343-6888
or email: dboyle@rsu.edu

Only $20
Cash, Check or credit card accepted.

“I so regret having to miss the Reunion this year and when I opened my mail today to find the OMA Documentary DVD, Angela and I immediately watched it. I can only think of one thing to say and that is Marvelous! I enjoyed every bit of it, including all the bonus films, which had such great history and information that I had never seen before and it brought back such great memories. You all did such a great job and I am sure my fellow alumni appreciated it as much as I did. I have June 5 and 6, 2015 on my calendar for our next OMA Alumni Reunion and have no other commitments, so I plan to be there.” – Hugh Miller ’53
Boots are officially back on College Hill for the first time in more than 40 years as the Oklahoma Army National Guard brought its Guard Officer Leadership Development (GOLD) program to Rogers State University this fall.

Eight Oklahoma Army National Guard soldiers make up the inaugural GOLD class. Those soldiers range in experience from a private who has been in the OKARNG for four months to a sergeant with 12 years of guard experience, including two combat tours.

SPC Jadica Piela is a senior biology major from Muskogee who transferred to RSU from Northeastern State University to participate in the GOLD program.

“I plan on applying to medical school and the Army’s physician assistant program,” SPC Piela said. “The academic and leadership training I’m receiving will be a big help advancing my career.”

SPC Piela also credits the opportunity to live on-campus and participate in more student activities as another draw of the GOLD program. She also gets to spend more time with her sister, Jianna, who plays on the Hillcat women’s soccer team.

SGT Daniel Lazear had no plans to attend college when he graduated from high school more than a decade ago. The senior nursing major from Oilton joined the OKARNG and has served two combat tours overseas, one in Iraq and the other in Kuwait.

SGT Lazear later earned an associate’s degree in firefighting from Tulsa Community College before coming to RSU.

“The GOLD program really falls in line with my career plans,” SGT Lazear said. “The financial assistance as well as the leadership training I am receiving is helping me get where I want to go.”

SGT Lazear plans to pursue a master’s in nursing after graduating from RSU.

The leadership program is open to OKARNG soldiers who attend RSU. Candidates can receive 100 percent of their college tuition paid, live on campus, develop leadership skills and accelerate their military career by being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the OKARNG upon completion of the program.

Captain Michael Mitchell serves as the Officer in Charge of the RSU GOLD program and RSU History and Political Science Department Head and Professor Dr. Ken Hicks serves as the academic coordinator.

RSU has a distinguished military history and operated as the Oklahoma Military Academy from 1919 until 1971, graduating hundreds of cadets into the officer ranks of America’s Armed Forces.

OMA alumni have played a critical role in establishing scholarships and endowments that help fund the educations of these citizen-soldiers.

One endowment to support the GOLD program has been established by the family of one of OMA’s most decorated alumni, Lt. Col. Ed Ramsey, who was instrumental in the liberation of the Japanese-occupied Philippines during World War II. His widow, Dr. Raquel "Raqui" Ramsey, has worked with the OMA Alumni Association to create an endowment that honors her husband through its support of the leadership program.

To learn how you can contribute to the educations of future GOLD soldiers, contact OMA Alumni Association Executive Director Dr. Danette Boyle at 918-343-6888 or dboyle@rsu.edu.
Transition from civilian life to the Oklahoma Military Academy was difficult for any teenager, but it was exponentially more challenging for a student who grew up in another country and who had limited English skills when he enrolled.

Angel Beltran, class of ‘66, did more than overcome these challenges. He thrived in the face of them to become a successful business owner and entrepreneur.

Beltran was born in El Paso, Texas, but was raised with his family across the border in the city of Juarez, Mexico, where he attended elementary school. When he turned 14, his father told him he would be attending OMA where he could master his English skills and develop the unique character that comes from military training.

When he arrived at OMA, Beltran was paired with a roommate who spoke Spanish and he was able to break down the language barriers and adapt to the strict OMA culture, which he described as being more rigorous than his later Army service.

His transition was so complete that he was able to make the honor roll during his second year, was named to the color guard and drill teams, and was elected freshman and sophomore class president.

During his time at OMA, he was able to pursue activities that had been closed to him growing up. Beltran had long wanted to play basketball with his school team in Mexico, but he was excluded by the local coach.

When he came to OMA, basketball coach Don Wofford took an interest in mentoring Beltran, which helped the player develop his confidence and eventually letter in basketball. This was the single most important break thru for the young cadet, as it built his confidence and self-esteem. Beltran said he will be forever grateful to coach Wofford.

“For the six years that I was here, OMA was truly a family environment and it became a second home for me,” Beltran said. As evidence of this, he pointed to a treasured photo of his first Thanksgiving ever, as his Mexican family had never celebrated this American holiday, when he and classmate Delbert Crouch traveled to Buffalo, Oklahoma, to have the holiday meal with the Crouch family.

“Every Thanksgiving, I take that photo out to remind me of those strong friendships and the good people who helped me during my time at OMA,” Beltran said. He also recalls spending many weekends in Tulsa at the home of David Gallman’s family, who treated him as one of their own. Memories of their hospitality accompany Beltran all his life.

After graduating from OMA junior college, Beltran finished his college at the University of Texas-El Paso where he got his Second Lieutenant Commission and served two years in the army including a tour in Vietnam, where he earned a Bronze Star. Following his military service, he went to work for his father in El Paso in the electronics retail and wholesale industry, and later had the opportunity to purchase several businesses, including two radio stations and a firm that sold wireless beepers. He grew the beeper company from 800 subscribers to more than 19,000 during his ownership before he sold the firm in the mid-1990s.

Today, Beltran is mostly retired but stays active with real estate sales in El Paso, Mexico and Costa Rica. He volunteers with Boy Scouts of America, the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, and an elementary school he founded for Juarez’s underserved children.

Beltran has four children – three daughters and one son, and he has been married to his wife Rosalia since 1988. He has been active with the OMA Alumni Association, including two terms on its Board of Directors.

Dr. Danette Boyle, executive director of the OMA Alumni Association, credits Beltran for his quiet leadership and unwavering support that has helped advance the OMA legacy in recent years.

Beltran said he is grateful for his OMA experience and the strong bonds he built during his time on The Hill.

“I am so thankful to OMA for providing me with opportunities that I would not have been able to enjoy otherwise,” Beltran said. “Here at OMA, I had the opportunity to prove myself, earn responsibility and learn leadership traits that I have used throughout my life.”
The OMA Alumni Association and Rogers State University have developed a bond that cannot be broken. The support RSU has given to the OMA Alumni has been instrumental in the establishment of the OMA Alumni Association that is stronger now than ever.

This bond has made it possible to keep the history and tradition of OMA alive on “The Hill.” The OMA Museum is a world-class museum that exemplifies and brings to life the Oklahoma Military Academy as it was for 52 years. The OMA Killed in Action Memorial, which occupies a prominent spot on the front of the RSU Claremore campus, honors the memories of all the OMA Cadets who were killed in action in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam; a tribute to these young OMA men who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our nation. However, the most important and meaningful outcome of the OMA Alumni Association is the relationships OMA Alumni have maintained with their fellow cadets.

As critical as RSU’s support has been for the development and maintenance of the OMA Alumni Association, the response from OMA Alumni has been over and above even that. It is nothing short of phenomenal. In the last 40 years, OMA Alumni have supported many capital projects on campus and they have overwhelmingly supported the students with scholarships. The OMA Alumni donors ensure a legacy of hope, opportunities and accomplishment for the students who receive the benefits of their education.

OMA Alumni have often chosen to include generous gifts for the support of RSU students through planned gifts from their estates or trusts. This way, donors can make a large gift and still maintain their present lifestyle.

Jim Burt ‘55 and his wife Judith have generously given to RSU and supported OMA Alumni projects for many years. This past June, Jim contacted Dr. Danette Boyle, OMA Alumni Executive Director, to inform her that he and Judith wanted to contribute a gift from their trust for the OMA Fifties Scholarship Endowment. This Scholarship Endowment was started in 1991 by Ted Wright ‘52 and several OMA alumni with a combined gift of $5,000 and has now grown to more than $100,000.

On several occasions Jim has urged the OMA Alumni Association to make a more active effort to promote the Scholarship Funds. He and Judith hope their gift will call attention to the funds and encourage others to remember them in their year-end giving and in their estate planning.

John Charles Owens ‘63 enrolled at OMA when he was 16 years old. His memory of that first semester is one he has never forgotten. “I am not sure which was worse, the record number of days below freezing that winter or the cultural shock experienced, but my first semester was bad,” Owens said. In spite of this, he survived and returned home for the summer. After some rest and relaxation, he came back for both his senior year of high school and his freshman year in college.

Owens recalls two wonderful faculty members while at OMA, Major Clyde F. Deaton and Major Warren S. Kleinsteiber, both of whom had a lasting positive impact on him. He never forgot OMA and has often visited the campus and attended the annual reunions. Over the years, he realized just how much his life had been positively impacted by the institution. This culminated in Owens contacting Dr. Boyle to work with her in establishing a planned gift that will create a Scholarship Endowment in Business Administration at RSU.

Jim Burt ‘55 and John Owens ‘63 are just two of the OMA Alumni that have included planned gifts for scholarships for students at RSU and other university projects.

### LIST OF PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE CONTRIBUTORS THROUGH PLANNED GIFTS

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<td>Dr. Danette Boyle</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Al Knight</td>
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<td>Matt Braun ’53</td>
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For more information about how you can ensure the legacy of the Oklahoma Military Academy and set up a gift through your estate or trust, contact Dr. Danette Boyle at 918 343-6888 or dboyle@rsu.edu. She can then schedule a meeting to sit with you and explain the process.
THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF WARNOCK HARWELL

Warnock Harwell’s story was featured in both the Fall 2013 and Winter 2014 *Guidons*. The two issues covered how Warnock was granted a scholarship to attend the Oklahoma Military Academy and how he met and married the daughter of music director P. H. Kelley. Mr. Harwell’s story came to a close this year on June 26 when he died at the age of 91.

One of the oldest alumni, he was also one of the most dedicated to the museum and to the Alumni Association. Warnock regularly visited the museum numerous times a year, often with his son Jerry, who lives on the opposite side of the country. Knowing how special the museum and the OMA Alumni Association were to Warnock, Dr. Danette Boyle and RSU President Larry Rice planned a surprise party for his 85th birthday, which was held at the museum. Warnock had a wonderful time celebrating his birthday with his beloved children, Cindy Johnson and Jerry Harwell in a place dear to his heart. Harwell’s daughter Linda Harwell was unable to attend.

Warnock never forgot how it felt to be granted entrance to a place he couldn’t afford to attend, or how grateful he felt to the people and institution that made his attendance possible. Those feelings stayed with him throughout his life and he eventually established the Warnock D. and Gloria Harwell Scholarship Endowment, which provides support to students and veterans with “great financial need or physical handicaps.” He also contributed to the P. H. Kelley Scholarship Endowment, a scholarship created by a group of former cadets to honor Warnock’s father-in-law.

Mr. Harwell left a generous gift in his estate to the Association he loved so much throughout his life. Although Warnock’s story has ended, his love and generosity for the Oklahoma Military Academy, his fellow cadets and Rogers State students will live on in the grand legacy he left.

RSU UPDATE

RSU OPENS CHAPMAN DINING HALL

In August, Rogers State University opened the $5 million Chapman Dining Hall that will serve more than 1,000 students per meal, as well as provide them with a basement storm shelter during inclement weather. OMA alumni played a crucial role in private fundraising efforts to help pay for the 17,000-square-foot building with more than a third of the facility donors affiliated with OMA.

RSU CONTINUES TOWARDS NCAA CANDIDACY

Rogers State University received notification this summer from the National Collegiate Athletic Association that it successfully completed Candidacy Year One in the association’s Division II membership process and is now in Candidacy Year Two.

RSU President Dr. Larry Rice said, “We feel that Division II membership remains a great fit for Rogers State because of its emphasis on balancing academic excellence, athletic achievement and community engagement.”

Rice praised the efforts of Director of Athletics Ryan Erwin, RSU coaches, faculty and staff who have worked together in the Division II membership process.

Full, active membership in NCAA Division II is a three-year process, and RSU remains ineligible for NCAA postseason play until it completes the progression, but RSU will continue to play full NCAA and Heartland Conference schedules in 2014-15. The Hillcats completed their first year as members of the NCAA Division II Heartland Conference during the 2013-2014 season.

With the successful completion of Candidacy Year Two at the end of the 2014-15 academic year, RSU then will enter the third year and final year during 2015-16.
GUIDON

GUIDON is a newsletter published for alumni of Oklahoma Military Academy by the OMA Alumni Office at Rogers State University. Send correspondence and address corrections to: OMA Alumni Office, Rogers State University, 1701 W. Will Rogers Blvd., Claremore, OK 74017-3252.

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