

## Keeping the Tradition Alive

Greetings from Tigertown!

Another semester has ended, and the Clemson campus is noticeably quieter. Many of our students have departed for summer adventures and others have successfully completed the most impactful four years of their lives. Last week, more than 4,400 graduates were honored during commencement ceremonies. The potential for our newest alumni is infinite, and we are excited to learn how these Tigers will change the world for the better.

As we celebrate our students reaching great milestones, we also reflect on the service of others who have paved the way for all of us to pursue our cherished dreams. As a University with a rich military heritage, the service and sacrifice of our armed forces is engrained in our history. Since our founding in 1889 as a military college for cadets seeking academic excellence, we have worked diligently to protect our military heritage. However, during a particular time in our University's history, we faced significant challenges in preserving our ROTC and military programs. Several dedicated and determined Clemson alumni and military veterans met to discuss the formation of a joint Army and Air Force ROTC alumni organization. Their vision to provide financial support to prospective ROTC students and, in turn, sustain and grow the ROTC programs and military legacy at Clemson became a reality.

Over the past 25 years, we have made remarkable strides in strengthening the legacy of military service at our University. And you will not be surprised to hear that our Army ROTC is one of the nation's top units and officer-producing programs. In addition, our Air Force ROTC was awarded the Air Force Association's "Best AFROTC Unit" in South Carolina for 2020 and 2021. We have partnered with the Semper Fi Society and the Marine Corps Recruiting Services to develop and mentor the next generation of Marine Corps officers. Finally, we are honored to partner with the Military and Veteran Engagement Office to support our student-veterans who are transitioning out of military and into higher education. Through all these efforts, the proud Clemson tradition of military service has remained one of the strongest in our nation.

Many of my colleagues and friends recently attended the Clemson Corps' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in the Burton Gallery of Littlejohn Coliseum. With us to honor the 2023 Class of Cadets were several founding members who have retired from the military: Army Lt. Gen. Paul Eugene "Gene" Blackwell, Sr., Air Force Brigadier General "Hap" Carr, Air Force Colonel Sandy Edge, Air Force Colonel Alton "Al" Whitley, Army Lieutenant Colonel Bill Millar, and Army Major Luke Dawson. The event was presided by Clemson Corps Chairman Army Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Mullinax.



Lt. Gen. Blackwell was the keynote speaker, and as a founding member of Clemson Corps, he shared several thoughts and experiences that we would like to share with you:

“From its beginnings, Clemson A&M College – a land-grant institution of South Carolina, later Clemson College, then Clemson University, has always been linked to the value of military service. Countless Clemson men and women have served with honor and distinction in the defense of freedom. It is my opinion that the devoted and determined effort to pay tribute to our military heritage took on new life on June 10, 1995, with the official groundbreaking ceremony for what would become the Military Heritage Plaza. I was honored to speak at that event, wherein we recognized the fifteen values so proudly displayed and embodied the essence of a great university whose military heritage goes back to its origins with the first class of 400 cadets and continues to this day as one of the top universities in this nation. ROTC and military service are intricately entwined with our history.

The students who pass through Clemson represent the future of America. Building on the momentum of the groundbreaking ceremony and a crescendo of interest to more formally recognize Clemson's military heritage, the moment seemed right to take the next step. There was also another driving force for a call to action. The Army ROTC program was struggling to provide the number of new officers that the Army cadet command expected. There were rumors of terminating the Clemson Army ROTC program. It just so happened that the commanding general of cadet command was a gentleman who had previously worked for me. I contacted General Wallace and simply asked that we be given time to address the issue.

I explained that the proposed structure would serve to provide scholarship money for those interested in the ROTC program among other functions. Tonight is the first time I have acknowledged that communication. After many conversations and increased interest to formalize our efforts, a meeting took place on January 30, 1998 that included six people whose stated purpose was to brainstorm about the opportunities of a joint Army/Air Force ROTC scholarship endowment fund. At this meeting, the name of Clemson Corps was born.

It was also agreed that a primary role of the Corps would be to provide scholarship money for ROTC students. In fact, that was a commitment I made to General Wallace.

A group of approximately 13 individuals with varying ties to Clemson were brought together and briefed on status of the efforts to formalize the Corps. Their support was overwhelming, and as we say, the rest is history.

I, like you all, bleed Clemson orange. Clemson is the most valuable, meaningful and rewarding experience of my life. I have always exalted high the Clemson banner.

As I reflect on those here this evening, two thoughts come to mind. First, the privilege of being at Clemson and secondly, the privilege of serving our nation – past, present and future. There can be no greater honor. The founders of the Clemson Corps have done their part. Now, you can take up the gauntlet and continue to set the standard. That is your charge and challenge, and failure is not an option.”



During the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, General Blackwell's fellow founding member, Hap Carr, presented the Chalmers R. Carr and Jeannette D. Carr "Keeping the Tradition Alive" Award, which recognizes ROTC cadets and now student veterans for outstanding efforts and contributions in promoting Clemson's rich and distinguished military heritage and history.

Hap has always lived his life serving and giving to others, many of whom he will never meet, and he has been especially dedicated to the mission of Clemson Corps. One of the ways Hap – along with his late wife Jeannette – have and will continue to support Clemson Corps is through their estate plan. Their future gift will ensure that future generations of military leaders will have the necessary resources to achieve a quality education – while honoring Clemson's rich military heritage. Hap is a remarkable man who has truly lived a life of service, and I encourage you to read his full story [here](#). I know you will be inspired by his commitment to encourage and serve others.



When the founding members of Clemson Corps first joined together to restore and honor our University's military heritage, their mission was clear. They did not falter. They completed their mission; however, our work is far from over. Now, the Clemson Family must come together to enhance and expand the future for our students who have risked or are preparing to risk their lives to protect our freedoms.

Please consider how you can help us secure Clemson Corps' future. With your support, we will bolster our programs, award more scholarships and prepare the next generation of Clemson Tigers who will inspire and lead men and women to continue to Clemson tradition of military excellence. Please make your gift [here](#).



There are also other ways in which you can leave your mark on Clemson and future generations of Tigers. As you consider how you can support Clemson through future gift commitments, we encourage you to reach out to us for assistance. We are here to support you as you explore ways a future gift can make a difference for you, your family and future generations of Tigers. Our [website](#) features useful online resources we hope you will explore. Information regarding IRA Charitable

Qualified Distribution (QCD) benefits can be found [here](#). For information about general estate planning, please download our [free Wills Guide](#), which is designed to help you navigate your thoughts and plans before you visit with your attorney and financial advisors. And I always enjoy hearing from you directly via email at [jovanna@clemson.edu](mailto:jovanna@clemson.edu).

As we salute our graduates and cadets for their outstanding accomplishments, I am reminded of the wisdom imparted by the great poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us." You will continue to accomplish great things and you can always count on your Clemson Family to cheer you on in your next endeavor.

Best wishes to everyone as you embark on your summer plans. We sincerely hope it will be filled with plentiful sunshine, infectious laughter and meaningful time with those you love and admire. We also hope to C U on campus soon! Our Clemson ice cream and blue cheese are still amazing and certainly worth the trip.

GO Tigers!  
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