



# OAK LEAF

MAGAZINE

2021 SPRING/SUMMER EDITION



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under the direction of Mr. Rex Blackburn.*



**OAK RIDGE**  
MILITARY ACADEMY

from the office of the  
**PRESIDENT**

What a year! In 2020-2021 we witnessed amazing accomplishments in the face of unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives in ways that we could never have imagined, and will no doubt continue to present obstacles as we move forward. But as a First Sergeant once said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," and that's exactly what our Academy did. With the outstanding leadership and support from our alumni, our academy moved on with little interruption.

Great leadership is often marked with foresight, as was the case with our Academic Dean, Caroline McKaughan. Last year, Dean McKaughan requested that we invest in Google Chromebooks for our students in order to prepare them more thoroughly for the college experience - but also to provide a seamless educational experience if a quarantine need arose during the year. Both scenarios proved to be correct. When the pandemic showed its ugly head at our academy and a 7-day quarantine was initiated, our teaching schedule was not interrupted, where many private and local schools were forced to close. Condensing our teaching schedule, extending classes to Saturday, and moving up our graduation date enabled our academy to offer our cadets an uninterrupted education.

But as we navigated these unknown and treacherous pandemic waters, our leadership and alumni stepped up and enabled us to accomplish some amazing things. Our rappel tower has been sandblasted and painted, the long-awaited water tower repair has been accomplished, new LED lights have been installed in Bonner Field House and most of the academic building, there has been a complete renovation of Cone Dorm, and reroofing projects have been completed for Armfield, Cone, and Bonner. Also, the Ragsdale Library has been updated and restored for cadet use. A special thanks goes to our alumni, board members, and foundations that have made all of this possible.

Our reenrollment for next year is going to run at almost 70%, making our hopes of 100 total cadets well within range. But our primary recruiting goal is to enroll the right young person to become one of our cadets. "We are looking for a few good boys and girls." This was proven last year by the quality of cadets who attended our academy, verified by our teachers and JROTC department. The 2021 graduating class was awarded over \$1,000,000 in college and service academy scholarships! We are judged by the students we graduate, and we are all very proud of our class of 2021.

On a personal note, last December I contracted the COVID virus and was hospitalized and rehabilitated for over 30 days. I have often said that you always find out how good a manager you are when you leave, not when you are present. I was extremely proud of how our staff maintained our academy in my absence. This is without exception the best staff that I have ever had the privilege to work with.

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**"...when the going gets tough, the tough get going. And that's exactly what our Academy did."**

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Finally, to the alumni, parents, and friends of Oak Ridge Military Academy, thank you again for your continued financial and moral support, it is always noticed and ever appreciated. Our success is in no small part due to you. Tendimus in Latium. God bless Oak Ridge!



*Dr. Thomas Steve Wilson*  
PRESIDENT,  
OAK RIDGE MILITARY ACADEMY

# CADET PROFILE

JAMES VANWINKLE

James Vanwinkle graduated from Oak Ridge in May, 2021. Coming to ORMA has been a triumphant move for James, both academically and holistically. Not only did James's GPA climb from a 2.2 to well over 3.0, but he accomplished this while participating in band, Cross-Country, Drill Team, and Battalion Staff, in the S-4 position. The leadership roles James was able to fill at ORMA would never have been available to him in another context. Adopted at a young age from Waco, TX, James used to lack confidence in himself, and never saw himself as a leader. According to his father, Major Robert Forde, "Once James arrived at ORMA, that desire for leadership began to develop, and he truly took on the responsibilities of a leader at Oak Ridge." James's college of choice is Gardner-Webb University, from which he has received sizeable scholarship offers. Congratulations, James!

# FACULTY PROFILE

CAROLYN WRAY

Carolyn Wray is one of the most experienced and talented members of ORMA's faculty. Having completed 41 years as a math instructor, she spent most of that time in the public school system, but has spent the last 10 of those years at Oak Ridge. When selecting the faculty member to feature in this edition, the Oak Leaf staff unanimously voted to feature Ms. Wray. She's highly-respected among the cadets because she personifies expertise, professionalism, and affection for her students.

Ms. Wray finds ORMA to be an exceptional learning environment, which is no small fact given her extensive career: "Teaching at ORMA has been a great experience for me. The Academy offers a community focused on the development of young people. There is no back row at Oak Ridge."

*"THERE IS NO BACK ROW AT OAK RIDGE"*

Wray continues, "My favorite thing about ORMA is the many platforms that are available to all cadets. All must participate in academics, athletics, and military programming. This level playing field develops character, teamwork skills, responsible attitudes, and ownership of one's choices and outcomes: a true journey of self-discovery and reward." Ms. Wray is a valued member of our faculty, and we're thankful for her presence here.





# NEWS FROM

## NATIONAL PARKS TRIP

Last year, our cadets were scheduled to take an international trip to Germany and Switzerland, which was unfortunately canceled due to COVID-19 concerns. This April, ORMA reintroduced our travel program, sending 14 students on a tour through several national parks in the western United States in partnership with Explorica. Cadets were able to see the Grand Canyon, tour Bryce Canyon, and briefly visit Las Vegas. Ms. Lever, one of the chaperones, commented, "The students loved it! So many had no idea that these parks existed with such beauty. It was such a fantastic experience for our students."



# OAK RIDGE

## DRUM & BUGLE CORPS



There's nothing like hearing the sound of the drums, rattling the cadence as the cadets march across the campus. And now, ORMA's band is back! Complete with drums, brass, xylophones, and -- of course -- cymbals, the band provides a consistent cadence as the cadets march. Also, the band participates at sporting events, giving an additional measure of excitement to our home games.

## GRADUATION

Every graduate from Oak Ridge Military Academy can remember the day that they completed their journey at ORMA. Though it is obviously a joyful occasion, the ceremony is always marked by a sense of solemnity as well. Cadets are able to reflect on the utter uniqueness of the Oak Ridge experience, recognizing that the difficulties they endured have formed a camaraderie that few others their age can know. On May 22nd, the seniors of the 169th Corps of Cadets took their place in the Long Gray Line of ORMA's alumni. It is our hope that they will think fondly of their time at Oak Ridge, and that their lives would be characterized by character, discipline, honesty, and success. Go forward and do great things, class of 2021!



# DEVELOPMENT

## WATER TOWER



ORMA's Water Tower is a silent staple of the campus which has been in need of attention. Fortunately, a \$28,000 donation has been received for a comprehensive renovation of the water tower. The tower has been completely restored with a coat of fresh paint, a total sterilization of the interior, and some foundational repairs to the concrete bases. The water tower looks great, and we couldn't be more thankful for our generous donors!

## WOODARD RAPPEL TOWER

In the Fall/Winter 2020 edition of the Oak Leaf, we featured a project on our wishlist concerning the Woodward Rappel Tower. We're pleased to announce that the rappel tower project has been fully funded, and the renovations on the tower are complete. Thank you, donors!



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Due to the hard work of ORMA's Athletic Director, Bobby Allison, we have been fortunate to establish partnerships with several organizations in our community, allowing them to use some of ORMA's facilities to host community events, and to give increased local exposure to our campus and mission. We would like to thank to Stokesdale Parks and Recreation, Summerfield Parks and Recreation, Oak Ridge Youth Association, and From the Earth Farmer's Market for their continued support of our school!

# IN MEMORY

## BARBARA FIELDS

*Barbara Fields served the students of Oak Ridge as nurse for nearly 20 years. The students remember her fondly, and she had warm thoughts of ORMA even to her final days. In fact, Nurse Fields will continue to positively influence our cadets for years to come by way of a \$10,000 annual scholarship fund in her memory. In her honor, the interior examination room of the Linville Infirmary will be named the Fields Cadet Clinic. It is our hope that she be remembered well among the cadets of Oak Ridge. Nurse Fields, you will be missed!*



# WISHLIST

## Armfield Dorm Renovation

*Cost: \$2,000/room*

Currently housing 50 cadets, 2 teachers, and our resident Nurse, Armfield Dormitory is in need of renovation. We would like to accomplish this project room-by-room, as with Cone Dormitory.

## Aviation Program Expansion

*Cost: \$3,000*

The success of our Aviation program warrants a new course. We anticipated about 8 students to participate in the PM classes--18 reported! The Tom Davis Foundation has funded the first course, but we are still in need of additional funds to expand the program.

## Connor House Renovation

*Cost: \$5,000*

More and more of our teachers are showing interest in on-campus housing, a mutually beneficial arrangement for both the teachers and the school. The Connor House is in desperate need of a new roof and interior repairs, and could be used to house on-campus faculty.

## Band Building Roof

*Cost: \$5,000*

The Band Building roof is in bad need of pressure washing and painting, a more expensive job than might be imagined, due to the use of a lift for hard-to-reach places. This roof continues to be an eyesore when visitors first arrive on campus. We would greatly appreciate your help!

## Academic or Athletic Scholarship

*Cost: \$5,000*

Our current admission fee is around \$30,000/year for a 7-day boarding student. Any help, by providing either a full or partial academic/athletic scholarship, would be helpful to our Admissions Department and a great aid to potential families that would not be able to otherwise afford to give their student the opportunity of the Oak Ridge experience.

# DONOR RECOGNITION

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## Order of the Oak Leaf \$5,000+

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Oak Ridge Foundation  
CEMALA Foundation  
Eddie & Jo Allison Smith  
Family Foundation  
Tom Davis Foundation

Mist Island Foundation Fund  
Doug Smith  
Ken & Cheryl Hartman  
Ken McDaniel

Fred McKinney  
Worth Mitchell  
Al Taylor  
Coak May  
Carlos Garcia

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## Gold Star Platoon Club \$1,000 - \$1,499

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J. William Moir Charitable Trust  
Forth Heffner  
James Ruark

Tony Robertson  
Briggs Textiles  
Steven Smith

Jay Wagner  
Michael Price  
Gaiimo Management Corp.

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## NCO Club \$200 - \$499

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Ronny Buchanan  
James Croom  
Robert Vogel

Dewey Sheffield  
Charles Williford  
Charles Parker

Richard Lennon  
Guilford Battle NSDAR  
Fabi Salas

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Thank you to each of our donors who have contributed to the vision of Oak Ridge!

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# ALUMNI

## HERNANI VAN DUNEM

*Class of 2018  
Currently on staff at ORMA  
Pursuing a Business Degree*

Hernani Van Dunem is a 2018 graduate of Oak Ridge Military Academy, and now finds himself working as a TAC Officer at ORMA, working his way through a Business degree at Guilford College. Having come to ORMA in 2015 from Luanda, Angola, it's doubtful that Van Dunem could have known how influential Oak Ridge would prove to be for him. Not only is ORMA his alma mater and his current employer, but Hernani is also engaged to Jiraphorn Noimanee, a fellow graduate of Oak Ridge who served as Battalion Commander in 2020. Commenting on ORMA's impact on his life, Hernani said, "I love Oak Ridge. Just being around people from different backgrounds and different perspectives from a young age -- it's helped me to work well with different types of people."

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# PROFILES

## WILLIAM NORTHROP

*Class of 1962  
Board of Trustees  
Author*

William Northrop, a beloved friend and alumnus of Oak Ridge, has unfortunately passed away. Bill graduated from ORMA in 1962, before going on to study history at the Citadel. In addition to his work as an author and military historian, Bill was a fixture at our academy for much of his life, serving at various times as the Commandant of Cadets, a member of the Board of trustees, the co-founder of the ORMA Museum & Archives, and an involved alumnus all his days.

Bill was passionate about the success of the school which he loved so much, and cherished the friendships he made during his time as a cadet. In order to honor his memory, there will be a memorial for Bill at ORMA's Homecoming Weekend, September 24-25. He will surely be missed--Rest well, cadet.

# CLASS NOTES

## Class of 1951

- Edwin “Wyman” Cockman, who graduated from the ORMI college preparatory program in 1951, passed away in March. He will be missed.

## Class of 1979

- Dr. Gary Burton Hilburn passed away in April. Gary served as a Green Beret, Air Force pilot, and in the U.S. Special Forces. He held a Ph.D. from Yale and was fluent in five languages. He was a husband, a father, and a friend.

## Class of 1991

- CPT Charles Ramsey II, Ret. spoke at ORMA’s graduation ceremony this year. It is always special when former cadets have the opportunity to invest in today’s cadet corps.

## Class of 1992

- Mike Radford passed away in June, losing his courageous battle with cancer. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

## Class of 1997

- Dr. Crystal Kyle, who earned her Ph.D. from Virginia Tech after her military service, currently works as a Biological Science Specialist for the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Also, she recently became an Associate Editor for the Journal of Veterans Studies. Keep up the good work!



## Class of 1997

- Richard Deitrich, a veteran and family man, passed away in March. Rest well, cadet.

## Class of 2010

- Lucia Karnes has been promoted to the position of Division Manager of Geospatial and Analytic Services at Boeing Intelligence and Analytics, where she has worked for over 4 years. Congratulations, cadet!

## Class of 2021

- Ethan Hurst, the Battalion Executive Officer for ORMA's most recent graduating class, has joined the Navy. He departed for Basic Training in June. He will be training to be a Machinist's Mate on a submarine. Good luck, Cadet Hurst!

## Class of 2022

- Joseph Essa, who attended ORMA in 2018-2019 and would have graduated with the class of 2022, has passed away. He was too young, and will be missed.

## ORMA Staff

- SSG Rick Barreau, who served ORMA's cadets as a TAC Officer for several years in the 1990s, passed away suddenly in April. Many former cadets have fond memories of Rick, and they will certainly miss him.

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*Do you have any information to share about Oak Ridge Military Academy alumni? Whether marriages, career developments, births, deaths, or other major life events--keep your fellow alumni informed by sending a note to our Alumni Relations representative, Angie Williams - [awilliams@oakridgemilitary.com](mailto:awilliams@oakridgemilitary.com)*





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Congratulations, Class of 2021!

