

A life of service

Duane Boyle becomes newest Honorary AOG member

By Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steven A. Simon '77 and Bryan Grossman



To look almost anywhere around the U.S. Air Force Academy is to see the impact of the Association of Graduates' newest honorary member, Duane Boyle.

The B-52 looming inside the North Gate? Boyle identified the site and designed the display.

The renovated Air Garden on the Terrazzo? Boyle oversaw the project, ensuring it complied with the intent of original landscape designer Dan Kiley.

The soaring Polaris Hall tower? Boyle conceived and managed a competition among designers to elicit the resultant structure.

The Southeast Asia Memorial Pavilion on the Heritage Trail at the Doolittle Cam-

pus? He developed several design concepts, including the one ultimately selected.

These are just a few of USAFA's landmarks that bear the imprint of the Academy's longtime architect, who retired in December 2024 after four decades of service and became the 48th person recognized with honorary membership in the Association of Graduates. The AOG board of directors approved the distinction in its July 25, meeting.

A MASTER PLANNER

Boyle grew up on the Air Force Academy campus, utilizing facilities such as the Field House and the cadet library while a student at Air Academy High School. Those experiences inspired him to become an architect. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture at University of Colorado, and then returned to Colorado Springs.

While awaiting licensing, he took an internship in Colorado Springs with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the Chicago-based architectural firm that had designed the Air Force Academy. Shortly thereafter, the Academy asked SOM to prepare a master plan, as there hadn't been one since the original construction in the late 1950s and early '60s. Boyle worked on that project.

That involvement reinforced Boyle's interest in modernist architecture. Upon completion of the master plan, SOM departed, leaving no one at USAFA to oversee the Academy's architectural integrity and ensure that future structures main-

tained the necessary design qualities to keep the campus thematically intact.

To address that shortcoming, prescient Academy officials brought Boyle onto the Academy staff, even though there was no architect position at the time.

Over the ensuing 40+ years, he oversaw every project that would alter the Academy's basic look. He conducted most of the Academy's master planning, ensuring that every new proposal took into consideration how the structures relate to and complement each other.

Boyle led the Academy's application process for inclusion in the Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places. That designation, authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is part of a national program to protect America's historic and architectural resources worthy of preservation. The Academy's iconic Cadet Area received this distinction on April 1, 2004, the 50th anniversary of the Academy's founding.

Even closer to home, Boyle generously gave his time in support of the Association of Graduates, contributing his design work for the Southeast Asia Memorial Pavilion. He contributed vital architectural facts and figures for many *Checkpoints* stories over the years, to include articles on the Air Garden restoration and the Cadet Chapel. This year, he also participated in a *Heritage Minute Special* podcast, a 90-minute oral history in which he described his career at the Academy.

Col. Simon, during the honorary mem-



Captions here.

bership ceremony, shared details of his working relationship with Boyle.

“Over the ensuing two-plus decades, Duane and I collaborated on several projects,” Col. Simon said. “Usually, it was me asking him for information for a tour script or a *Checkpoints* article. Sometimes, it was just me being nosy, wanting to hear the inside scoop on future projects. He was of course very busy but always made time to provide me with the details I needed.”

Col. Simon said that when he and Boyle began the *Heritage Minute Special* podcast, having Boyle on as a guest was “a necessity, a no-brainer.”

Col. Simon explained that Boyle had retired from the Academy and moved to Boulder, so they conducted the podcast interview remotely.

“Typically, these *Heritage Minute* podcast chats take 20 to 30 minutes,” Col. Simon said. “This one lasted an hour and a half! So much to discuss, so many architectural rabbit holes to explore!”

The show became a multi-part podcast separated into three episodes.

“When Part I dropped, the first person to respond was Col. Dick Rauschkolb, a member of the Class of ’70 Gift Committee,” Col. Simon said. “He commented that Duane deserved to be an honorary AOG Member. I instantly agreed and got mad at myself. I’ve always prided myself on identifying and nominating worthy individuals. I had already prepared five successful nomination packages, but I missed this big important one.

“I got right to work drafting Duane’s nomination.”

ON THE BOOKS

During his remarks, Boyle showed the audience two books to help describe his journey. One helped provide him with

the motivation to become an architect, while the other served as a prime example of the valuable contributions he made to the Academy.

Boyle held up *Architectural Drawing*, by Lawton Patten and Milton Rogness, while reflecting on how the Academy influenced him to be an architect. After regularly wandering around the Terrazzo and attending basketball games, he decided to take a technical drawing class at Air Academy High School. He still has that very copy of the book after all these years.

“In the middle of the book,” he states, “there is a chapter on polyhedra. In that chapter is a photo of the Cadet Chapel and a discussion of Tetrahedrons.”

Boyle also mentioned the 1994 volume *Modernism at Mid-Century: The Architecture of the United States Air Force Academy*. Boyle was heavily involved in that seminal work about the design and construction of the Academy campus. He served as the Academy’s primary contact with the editor and other individuals involved in the project. The book’s acknowledgement page thanks “Duane Boyle who, charged with overseeing the preparation of this book from the Academy’s side, made it a personal crusade.”

The book also contains an interview Boyle conducted with the then-superintendent, Lt. Gen. Bradley Hosmer ’59. That interview included Gen. Hosmer’s thoughts on the Academy both as a cadet and as the superintendent, as well as both men’s appreciation of the planners’ foresight that brought geographically separated facilities such as the power plant and the community center into the Academy’s integrated design.

RARE AIR

The Honorary Graduate program permits the Association of Graduates to recog-

nize non-graduates “who have rendered outstanding and conspicuous service to the Air Force, the Academy and/or the AOG,” according to the organization’s bylaws. The bylaws limit this accolade to 25 living individuals.

To become an honorary member, individuals must be recommended by a member of the Association of Graduates board of directors and receive approval of at least 80% of all directors.

Boyle’s induction as an honorary member took place Oct. 16 at Doolittle Hall.

“Duane Boyle has met and exceeded the requirements for being named an honorary member,” said Mark Hille ’97, Association & Foundation president and CEO, at the ceremony. “Thank you, Duane, for all you’ve done for our Academy and congratulations on your honorary membership.”

AOG Board Chair Lt. Col. [Ret.] Cathy Almand ’90 also spoke at the ceremony, saying, “Over 40 years, Mr. Boyle has offered an invaluable perspective of the Academy’s design history, and is committed to working with the AOG to preserve these stories for future generations. Awarding Mr. Boyle honorary membership, formally acknowledges his decades of meaningful contribution to the Air Force graduate community and aligns with the AOG mission.”

Boyle said he was honored to be recognized. He joins such luminaries as former Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, and Brig. Gen. Robert McDermott.

“I want to thank the United States Air Force Academy for allowing me to be a part of this amazing campus for so many years,” Boyle said. “I’d really like to stay involved with the Academy community, the Foundation and the AOG. ... I’m only a phone call away.” 