

# Falcon Foundation turns

*'Second chance' pays dividends for USAFA graduates and the nation*

**By Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jay Kelley '64**  
*Falcon Foundation President*

Sixty years ago, the Falcon Foundation came to life through a very small group of warrior airmen from World War II.

The idea began with then Col. George Simler, the athletic director at USAFA. It blossomed to reality thanks to the efforts of Gen. Curtis LeMay and Gen. Rosie O'Donnell and the airmen down in Dallas — among the Dallas Fort Worth Air Power Council. Along the way, Gen. Fred Anderson grabbed Gen. Johnny Alison and “decided to go to Dallas and get this thing going.”

To date, the Falcon Foundation has funded more than 3,000 Falcon Scholarships, made possible by generous contributions and endowments over the decades. Those contributions have helped launch the careers of countless leaders of character for our Academy, our Air Force and the nation.

The Foundation is entering its 60th year in support of the Air Force Academy, and we are pleased to announce that we will be around supporting USAFA for a long time to come.

We look forward to your continuing support of the Foundation as we join

with the USAFA Endowment and its upcoming comprehensive campaign in support of the Academy.

The formal announcement of the Falcon Foundation was made in Dallas on Sept. 28, 1958, by then Secretary of the Air Force James Douglas and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Tommy White.

Back in the day, the new Falcon Foundation was the second foundation in support of USAFA, the first being the Air Force Academy Foundation, which was made up primarily of citizens of Colorado Springs who brought the Academy to Colorado. The first Falcon Scholars were sent to prep school in 1958, entered the Academy in 1959 and graduated from USAFA with the Class of 1963.

Since those very early days, Falcon Scholars — young folks who didn't receive an appointment the first time they applied but were considered to have potential — have excelled at USAFA, on active duty and in business.

Falcon Scholars comprise about 4 to 5 percent of an entering class at USAFA. While at USAFA, they will fill 10 to 15 percent of the leadership positions in the Cadet Wing. Their successes include being No. 1 in their class, Rhodes Scholars, Cadet Wing commanders and vice commanders; and a multitude of cadet squad-

ron commanders and group commanders. Not bad for young people who didn't make it the first time they applied.

In addition, the Falcon Scholars have the highest graduation rate of any cohort entering USAFA.

On active duty, they have served as squadron, group, wing and MAJCOM commanders. These Falcons have the best retention/retirement rate among USAFA graduates.

Importantly, the Academy has had five graduates become chief of staff of the Air Force. The last two are both Falcon Scholars.

So from being 4 to 5 percent of an entering class, the Falcons have produced 40 percent of the Academy graduates who became CSAF. Now that is a pretty darn good return on the investment of the Falcon Foundation in support of the Academy, our Air Force and the nation.

Falcon Scholars also have entered the business world and include CEOs and founders of companies throughout the nation, all in service to the country. Among the Falcon Scholars — remember they did not receive an appointment the first time they applied — are Bart Holaday '65, Gen. (Ret.) Bill Looney '72 and Gen. (Ret.) Mark Welsh '76, and of course our current Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. Dave Goldfein '83. ▶



*Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jay Kelley '64, Falcon Foundation president, is encircled by some of the Falcon Scholars currently enrolled at USAFA. (Photo by Ryan Hall)*



Bart Holaday



Bill Looney



Mark Welsh

**Mr. Holaday** was the first Falcon Scholar to receive a Rhodes Scholarship.

“I attended New Mexico Military on a Falcon Scholarship,” he says. “While I was there, I got to play football with a Naval Academy Foundation Scholar by the name of Roger Staubach, who has remained a lifelong friend. You just don’t know where a Falcon Scholarship will lead nor what outstanding people you may meet along the way. I am forever thankful for my Falcon Scholarship and the doors of opportunity it opened. But with opportunity also comes responsibility. All of us were privileged to attend the Academy. So with me, please help shoulder the responsibility to support the institution that enabled so much success for each of us. For me, it was first the Falcon Foundation, but for all of us it was the U.S. Air Force Academy. Please do your part to generously support our Academy.”

**Gen. Looney** was the first Falcon Scholar to become a four-star general.

“I graduated with the Class of 1972 and began my career as a UPT student at Sheppard Air Force Base,” he says. “From there I spent the next 25 years in flying operations commanding at the squadron and wing level. I then spent four years in Space Command and three years in acquisition, primarily as a commander of several organizations. I concluded my career in AETC in 2008. I have always credited the Falcon Foundation with making it possible to live my childhood dream — attend the Air Force Academy, become an officer and pilot, and have an exciting and challenging career serving our nation. Without the Falcon Scholarship, I doubt I would have lived that dream, and my life would have taken a completely different path. I’m so thankful I got a second chance at an appointment. I’m in ... are you?”

**Gen. Welsh** was the first Falcon Scholar to become chief of staff, U.S. Air Force.

“I attended Wentworth Military Academy on a Falcon Foundation Schol-

arship and was then lucky enough to enter USAFA and graduate with the Class of ’76,” he recalls. “After graduation, I spent 40 years in our Air Force; every day was a privilege. I flew the T-37 as an instructor, then the A-10 and F-16. I also spent time in the intelligence business, acquisition, programming, the joint world, the interagency, and NATO. Every assignment was a blessing. Everything I valued in my professional life was made possible by the Falcon Foundation, as were many of the things I value most in my personal life. For example, my classmates from CS-24 are still the best friends I’ve ever had ... I even married my roommate’s sister! Betty and I have been married for almost 41 years now. I can’t even imagine life without her by my side. Without the Falcon Foundation, I would never have met her. The Falcon Foundation Scholarship changed my world and gave me opportunities I never imagined. I’d like to help them do that for someone else. I hope you’ll join us.”

### Are You In?

That second chance — the reserve parachute so to speak, provided by the Falcon Foundation and enabled by the passion, enthusiasm, perseverance and excellence of our Falcon Scholars — has provided an extraordinary return on investment for our Academy, our Air Force and our nation.

Falcon Scholars have long been giants in support of the Academy, and we are proud and honored to state our continuing support and engagement with the Falcon Foundation and the USAFA Endowment going forward. Please help us sustain support to USAFA through your donation to the Falcon Foundation directly or through the USAFA Endowment.

We are in! How about you?

Donate through the Falcon Foundation website, [falconfoundation.org](http://falconfoundation.org), or through the USAFA Endowment website, [usafaendowment.org](http://usafaendowment.org). 