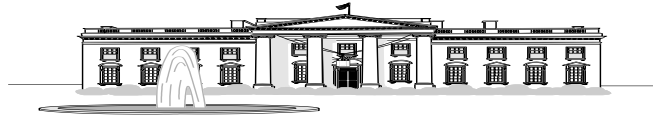


"The Aiguillette"

The Society of White House Military Aides

Fall 2021



Update – Fall 2021

November 30, 2021

Dear Society Members,

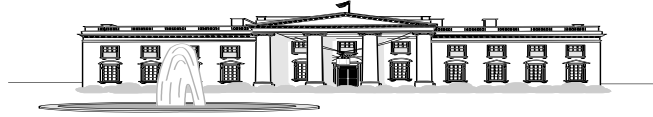
This is our new look newsletter, which Jim Barry (Reagan) and Sarah (Admin) will be putting together three or four times a year. Our goal for the newsletter is to have it be more current and easier to read. The highlights this year are quite interesting, and historic:

- 1. LT COL Shannon Walker (Bush '43) lead a J1 NEO unit during the evacuation of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. What a job!**
- 2. RADM (Ret) Mini Drew (Nixon, Bush, 41), our Navy Sr. Director, was inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame. Her spouse is BGEN (Ret) Phil Drew and they are the first White House military aides to be married. She is a direct descendant of Dolley Madison who saved old George Washington's portrait from the British.**
- 3. COL Jack Koser (Truman) in August 2021 departed this good earth at the age of 102 years old after a remarkable flying career. COL Jack, our senior aide, told us many wonderful stories of his time with fellow Missouri resident President Truman attending him on his famous walks with the press corps. While assigned in the pacific, he came upon the "Enola Gay in a hide location which a few days later dropped the atomic bomb on Japan." Jack was one of a kind, an amazing man with his mind good up to the end. We will sincerely miss him.**
- 4. Bess Abell, Social Secretary to President Johnson passed away August 2020 and served as a Society Trustee along with her husband Ambassador Tyler Abell. Tyler was Chief of Protocol to President Carter, and his uncle was a Presidential Aide. They hosted many events for us as a society and for me personally, inviting me to ride horses and dinner at their 200-acre Merry-Go-Round Farm in Potomac, MD. I have wished Tyler all the best who is still alert at age 89.**
- 5. Lt GEN (Ret) Brent Scowcroft (Nixon, Ford, Bush '41), was lost to us in August 2020, a Nixon Military Aide who served as National Security Advisor for both President Ford and President H. W. Bush, which to date no one else has done.**

The Aiguillette”

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During one of our luncheons with the future Secretary of the Air Force as speaker, Congresswoman Heather Wilson, Mr. Scowcroft turned to me and said “Good chow Kenn.” What a guy and what a privilege to be near him for a while.

6. MAJ Greg Tomlin (Obama) wrote a book several years ago, which was recently reviewed, “Murrow’s Cold War.” Murrow as Director of the USIA, under President Kennedy, effectively used public diplomacy and the Voice of America to advance the cause of freedom. And we're happy that he's getting more attention for this remarkable book.

So that's it for now. I hope you like the new, shorter format and will try to keep it up. Let us know how you like it – any feedback, positive or constructive is helpful: Kenn: lordstrider@earthlink.net, Jim: jtbtg87@gmail.com, Sarah: sarah_chapman@comcast.net.

God Bless,

Kenn Riordan, Jr.

The Society of White House Military Aides

“AN ASSOCIATION OF WHITE HOUSE MILITARY AIDES
WHO HAVE SERVED OUR NATION'S PRESIDENTS”



*Kenn Riordan, Jr., USA (Ret)
Founder and Chairman (Reagan)*

Shannon Walker Director of J-1, Joint Task Force-Crisis Response Afghanistan NEO

Home after 103-days. I love our military to my core and am humbly honored to have served in this historic event as the Director, J-1, Joint Task Force-Crisis Response Afghanistan NEO. I will never be the same as my heart will always carry love for the people of Afghanistan and the 124,000 people we helped evacuate. We lost 13 Heroes and they have names and will never be forgotten. As a Mortuary Officer, we handled them with the utmost respect, care, and honor.



Marianne Blackburn Drew Inducted Into The Delaware Women's Hall of Fame



Mimi (and five others) was inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame. She had been selected a year and a half ago, but due to Covid, the induction ceremony had been postponed. Here is a link to her 13-minute nomination and acceptance video (if you wish to view): [Marianne Blackburn Drew Inducted into The Delaware Women's Hall of Fame - YouTube](#)

Veterans' Stories: B-29 pilot went on to become aide to President Truman

By Jack Koser / as told to Abby Weingarten

Posted May 11, 2017 at 1:22 PM Updated May 11, 2017 at 5:50 PM



Jack Koser during his service years. [COURTESY PHOTO]

Born in 1919 in St. Joseph, Missouri, Jack Koser enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1940 and underwent flight training before heading overseas. During World War II, Koser was a B-29 pilot with the 6th Bomb Group, 39th Bomb Squadron, 313th Bombardment Wing of the 20th Air Force, and he flew 23 missions in the Pacific Theatre (namely on Tinian). He remained in the Air Force for 24 years (in various roles, including a stint as a personal aide to President Harry Truman at the post-war Pentagon) before ultimately retiring from the military as a colonel.

“I went through my pilot training and found out they needed pilots to fly the B-29 — an airplane that was so advanced, so modern. We were in pressurized, air-conditioned, beautiful airplanes and flew at 30,000 feet. I felt very happy, very lucky to be able to fly B-29s. I was sent to the Pacific, where we had to fly very long missions (some 15 hours). We would take off with 40,000 pounds of bombs and it was very hairy sometimes. I flew 23 missions.

On the day of the armistice, I flew a mission to China over a prisoner of war camp. We dropped supplies to the prisoners. We made two passes and dropped all kinds of food and medicines and

bicycles and clothes and blankets and everything else you could think of. It was near the south end of the Great Wall of China. It was an experience for me to see those prisoners waving their crutches and canes in the air at us as we flew over.

There weren't any guards there at the prisoner of war camp at the time because the war was over, so the prisoners were all milling around. They didn't even have anything to eat. But we saved a lot of them, I think, by taking our B-29s and filling them with all kinds of things and helping them. The prisoners thanked us later on when they came to our squadron to tell us what they liked. You know what they liked the most that we gave them? Peaches, canned peaches. They hadn't had anything like that for years.

Another one of my missions was over Japan and the flak was heavy that time. The flak hit one of our airplanes. No one was injured but it knocked out the propeller on the No. 4 engine. Then the engineer said we were losing pressure on the No. 3 engine. But I continued on, flying on two engines on a four-engine airplane (two engines on one side, too). We were flying along and had to drop down to 5,000 feet so that we were at a lower altitude for bailout."



*Jack Koser flew 23 missions as a B-29 pilot during World War II. In addition to bombing runs over Japan, he dropped supplies to prisoners of war.
[HERALD-TRIBUNE PHOTO / ABBY WEINGARTEN]*

Bess Abell, White House Social Secretary During Johnson Administration, Dies at 87

By Emily Langer. [The Washington Post](#) October 10, 2020.



Bess Abell, far right, aboard the presidential yacht the Sequoia in 1998 with other White House social secretaries, from left: Capricia Marshall, Ann Stock, Letitia Baldrige, Nancy Ruwe, Lucy Winchester Breathitt and Maria Downs. (Annie Groer/The Washington Post)

Bess Abell, who as White House social secretary during the Johnson administration orchestrated state dinners, wedding celebrations for the president's daughters and a calendar of receptions that made her, in the estimation of first lady Lady Bird Johnson, "the greatest showman since P.T. Barnum," died Oct. 9 at a family home in Potomac, Md. She was 87.

The cause was complications from Alzheimer's disease, said her husband, Tyler Abell, who served in the final months of Johnson's presidency as chief of protocol. His appointment carried ambassadorial rank and, along with his wife's position, placed the Abells among the elite Washington power couples of that era.

Mrs. Abell's acquaintance with the Johnsons dated at least to the 1950s, when Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Tex.) was serving as Senate majority leader and Mrs. Abell's father, Sen. Earle C. Clements (D-Ky.), was majority whip. The Johnsons feted Bess and Tyler Abell when they married in 1955, and five years later, the Abells named their second son Lyndon, after the future president.

Mrs. Abell volunteered in the 1960 campaign that thrust Lyndon Johnson to the vice presidency, under President John F. Kennedy, and became personal secretary to Johnson's wife, Lady Bird, after their victory. Upon Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Lyndon was sworn in as president, Lady Bird became first lady, and soon after, Mrs. Abell was named social secretary.

Perhaps the best-known woman to have previously held the role — at the time no man had served as White House social secretary — was [Letitia Baldrige](#), a friend of Jacqueline Kennedy's who was credited with helping the Kennedys project the aura of elegance that made their White House years known as Camelot.

“Lady Bird Johnson placed tremendous confidence in Bess Abell, giving her even more responsibility than had been granted the Kennedy social secretaries,” Borrelli continued. “Comparing the administrations, Chief Usher J.B. West concluded that Bess Abell ‘did for Mrs. Johnson what Mamie Eisenhower and Jacqueline Kennedy had done for themselves. . . . It wasn’t just that Bess *assumed* more authority than previous social secretaries, she’d been *granted* that authority by Mrs. Johnson.’ ”

Mrs. Abell set her clock five minutes fast to ensure the timely execution of her job. Her duties required military-level precision and coordination with the head usher, chef, florist and service staff of the White House — not to mention the entourages of visiting dignitaries from around the world. According to a Washington Post report at the time, she “planned, organized and staged the entertaining and feeding of nearly 80,000 presidential guests” — and that was only in her first three years on the job.

In her more official state functions, Mrs. Abell was responsible for finding gifts for visiting dignitaries. Instructing her on that duty, President Johnson told her to “spend more imagination and less taxpayer money,” she later recalled.

There were occasional slip-ups, such as the time she presented a cigar humidor to a head of state who favored cigarettes. Another time, for a visit by British Prime Minister [Harold Wilson](#), she arranged a performance at the White House by the operatic baritone [Robert Merrill](#).

“You can’t be serious,” national security adviser [Walt W. Rostow](#) exclaimed when he saw Merrill’s proposed program. “This must be a joke. To the prime minister who pulled the British out of Suez, you’re singing ‘On the Road to Mandalay.’ And you serenade the man who devalued the British pound with ‘I’ve Got Plenty of Nothing’?”

Mrs. Abell served as White House social secretary until Johnson left office in 1969. During the Carter administration, she was executive assistant to [Joan Mondale](#), the wife of Vice President Walter Mondale. Later, Mrs. Abell operated Bess Abell Enterprises, a Washington public relations firm, and with her husband oversaw the development of Merry-Go-Round Farm, a community of homes in Potomac, Md., built on land previously owned by Drew Pearson.

In 1968, when her husband became chief of protocol, Mrs. Abell [joked](#) to the New York Times that by the time Johnson left office, she would have “worked with four chiefs of protocol. Three of them I liked very much, and one I am in love with.”

The novelty of a husband-wife duo in their positions prompted curiosity as well as amusement. “What would be the consequences to the United States,” wondered [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach](#), a former U.S. attorney general then serving as undersecretary of state, “if you and your wife had a fight and were not speaking to each other?”

Longtime Public Servant Brent Scowcroft Dies

By Texas A&M University Division of Marketing & Communications. AUGUST 7, 2020



Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft was the former national security advisor to former President George H.W. Bush. He is the namesake of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service. Source: Bush School of Government & Public Service

Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft — who dedicated six decades to government service and whose namesake is on the international affairs institute at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University — passed away Thursday, Aug. 6.

The former national security advisor to both Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush was regarded as an American patriot and public servant with an extraordinary military and government service career. Friends said his entire professional life was devoted to how best to protect America and advance its interests.

Admired for mentoring two generations of American public servants who revered him for his brilliance, integrity, humility and fundamental decency, Scowcroft is considered one of the most influential experts in international affairs.

He is the only man to have served two presidents as National Security Advisor. Given his role as advisor to U.S. Presidents Richard Nixon through Barack Obama, no individual has provided as many commanders-in-chief as much national security advice – irrespective of party lines.

Andrew H. Card Jr., interim CEO of the Bush Foundation, said though many will mourn his passing, “we can take heart that his legacy lives on in the fantastic work of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs within the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M.”

“He was a public servant of the highest order, always putting the good of the country ahead of other concerns,” Card said. “Nobody worked longer hours, nobody knew more about working the levers of international power, and in the end very few contributed more to the universal cause of freedom than Brent Scowcroft. “It is altogether fitting that, while these two giants have left us, the life’s

work of George Bush and Brent Scowcroft will be forever linked in Aggieland,” Card said.

“From his distinguished career in the U.S. Air Force to his many contributions to enhancing our national security under multiple U.S. Presidents, Brent Scowcroft led a legendary life of service,” said Texas A&M President Michael K. Young. “As the namesake of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, he helped bring some of the world’s leading minds to our campus to discuss and debate vital policies shaping the world of today and tomorrow. His impact and his influence at Texas A&M and around the world were immeasurable, and he will be greatly missed.”

Informed by the philosophy he called “enlightened realism,” Scowcroft recognized the essential – though not limitless – role U.S. power and leadership could play in making the world a safer and more prosperous place. His legacy is set apart not just by his worldview, but also by the way he operated in the world. Despite his military background, Scowcroft held the belief that although military force is an important tool of statecraft, it is not a substitute for policy and diplomacy. His thinking, which placed a premium on strategy, was guided by key principles, including the importance of history in shaping international affairs, the necessity of strong U.S. international leadership to ensure that a world of national disorder does not become chaos, the importance of gaining domestic and international support for U.S. leadership, and the utility of working through allies, coalitions and international institutions.

His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal (Air Force design), Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, and the Air Force Commendation Medal. He served through the rank of lieutenant general. He retired from this position to serve as national security advisor to President Ford.

Following retirement from the military, he continued in public policy serving numerous administrations. Scowcroft joined President George H.W. Bush’s administration as national security advisor during a period of historic change, which included the end of the Cold War, German reunification and the first Gulf War in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. He chaired or served on the President’s Advisory Committee on Arms Control, the Commission on Strategic Forces, the President’s Special Review Board (also known as the Tower Commission), the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the Secretary of State’s Advisory Board, the Secretary of Defense’s Policy Board, and the Secretary of Energy’s Advisory Board. He also served on numerous corporate and nonprofit boards.

In 1991, Scowcroft was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, by President George H.W. Bush, and in 1993 was awarded an honorary knighthood – a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) – by Queen Elizabeth II. In 2009, he was presented the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in 2015 the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.



Scowcroft served in President George H.W. Bush’s administration during a period of historic change. Source: Bush School of Government & Public Service

GREGORY M. TOMLIN. *Murrow's Cold War:*

Public Diplomacy for the Kennedy Administration.

Murrow's Cold War: Public Diplomacy for the Kennedy Administration. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2016. Pp. xxxiii, 353. \$34.95. Philip Seib *The American Historical Review*, Volume 122, Issue 1, 1 February 2017, Pages 200–201, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/122.1.200> Published: 31 January 2017

After working for more than two decades as one of America's most influential journalists, Edward R. Murrow, at the request of President John F. Kennedy, became director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1961. He served for slightly less than three years before his deteriorating health forced him to step down, but during his tenure he did much to define America's global image in ways that significantly strengthened U.S. Cold War strategy.

In *Murrow's Cold War: Public Diplomacy for the Kennedy Administration*, Gregory M. Tomlin does a superb job of analyzing the ways in which Murrow's journalistic and bureaucratic skills proved so valuable to the Kennedy administration. Tomlin observes that Murrow had to "preserve the balance between his agency's presentation of news and its championing of America, since the USIA could not opt out of either" (29).

