



# Salute Serve from Yard to Battlespace!

Volume 1, Issue 1  
July 15, 2024



We are honored to unveil the inaugural edition of the UAPB Commissioned Officers' Association (COA) history update, **Salute Serve!**. This history update serves as a bridge between our storied past and the boundless opportunities that lie ahead. Within these pages, you'll find a rich tapestry of stories, updates, and COA accomplishments that underscore our unwavering commitment to UAPB, the ROTC program, and the exceptional officers commissioned through our historic institution.

## What Awaits You:

**COA's Impact:** Discover how the COA has empowered cadets through professional mentorship, academic scholarships, no-interest loans, and collaborative initiatives. Your steadfast support has fueled our collective success!

**Inspiring Alumni Profiles:** Immerse yourself in the journeys of fellow alumni who actively engage with Dear Mother, professional and local communities. Their stories will ignite your pride and inspire new connections.

**ROTC Excellence:** Explore the remarkable service and achievements of our ROTC cadets. Their leadership embodies the spirit instilled in GLB cadets over 55 years ago.

## Your Voice Shapes Our Narrative:

We invite you to contribute to this living history. Share your pre-, present, and post-military achievements, community impact, and cherished memories from your UAPB ROTC or military days. Have ideas for future content? Reach out—we're all ears! Your insights will shape the next issue, ensuring it resonates with every COA member and UAPB alumni family. Thank you for being an integral part of our UAPB ROTC and COA legacy. Let's celebrate our shared journey, honor our traditions, and forge new connections. - Calvin Farr '72 and James Parker '82

## Founding Members and Vision:

The UAPB Commissioned Officers Association (COA) was formed 16 years ago by Marvel, Arkansas natives and UAPB ROTC alumni Thomas Vaughn '72 and Delloyd Wilson '74. These two leaders envisioned a dynamic community where members could collaborate, lead, engage actively in community service, contribute meaningfully to UAPB legacy, and uphold the highest standards of military and professional service. The founder's vision and members' commitment to foster lifelong connections and professional growth laid the framework for the success of the COA. Here are some historical insights into this distinguished group of former and present military officers and UAPB Army ROTC cadets:

The COA has had only three members to serve in the position of President.

**2008 – 2018: Grover Gibson, 1970, Quartermaster Corps.** President Gibson was a member of the first group of cadets commissioned through the UAPB Army ROTC in 1970. He, also was the first COA president. President Gibson was a true forerunner, and it showed up pre-, present and post-military. Back in 1970, he was a Golden Lion Battalion (GLB) cadet senior leader and part of the very first group of cadets commissioned through the UAPB Army ROTC Program. He also became the very first president of the Commissioned Officers' Association (COA). President Gibson's leadership during that crucial first decade was first-rate. He and the founders were about excellence and worked tirelessly to lay the foundation for our association's success.

President Gibson kicked things off by organizing the first board of officers and skillfully instituting systems and processes for the COA. This included embracing technology by ensuring the development of a website with COA history and social media tools. This way, COA members and friends could learn about the COA, stay informed about activities, pay dues, and donate online. But wait, there's more! President Gibson was a networking wizard. He maintained close connections with the UAPB National Alumni Association President and Board, UAPB leadership, the GLB, and members of the military, federal, and state government. Knowing the importance of having funds to operate the COA and support GLB cadets, President Gibson championed fundraising efforts for alumni operations and cadet scholarships.

President Gibson understood the importance of honoring our veterans and preserving the COA's shared past. He ensured that ROTC and military memorabilia found a home in the UAPB Museum. He even collaborated with the Chancellor's office and plant officials to secure a site on campus grounds for a Veterans memorial. President Gibson he either hosted or played a key role in planning quinquennial COA celebration events between 2008 and 2023. He often coordinated with COA members and UAPB and professors of military science and staff to ensure a strong COA presence at commissioning ceremonies, homecoming, Veterans Day, and Founders Day events. Notably, he helped select COA members to deliver keynote addresses at GLB spring military balls.

President Gibson's commitment to following the rules - those bylaws - and keeping the COA running smoothly was top-notch. When he passed the torch to his successor, the COA was in fantastic shape to continue fostering camaraderie, upholding military values, and contributing to the UAPB and GLB community.

**2018 – 2023: Charles Griffith, Jr. 1983, Ordnance Corps, Ammunition and Maintenance.** President Griffith was a member of the largest group of cadets commissioned through the UAPB Army ROTC Program to date. Inspired by his late parents and grandparents—Charles and Mary Griffith, Sr., and Fred and Classie Griffith—President Griffith continues to be a pillar in his community, embodying the values of leadership, service, and faith. Before and after transitioning from the military, President Griffith left an indelible mark on both military and civilian spheres through his career in public service and community service. During his six-year tenure as a JROTC Senior Army Instructor, President Griffith made a significant impact at White Haven High School in Memphis, TN, and later at Eagleville High School near Nashville. As an Assistant and Head Track Coach, he guided several athletes to qualify for the Tennessee State Track Meet. Drawing on his accounting degree from UAPB, President Griffith served as an Accountant II for the State of TN, contributing significantly to the Tennessee Purchase Card (PCard) Program. After seven years in this role, he followed in his father's footsteps, retiring at age 55.

Beyond his military background, President Griffith's leadership and strategic thinking have been instrumental in community service. He held two terms as Basileus of an Omega Psi Phi Fraternity chapter in Murfreesboro, TN, and served as Chief Financial Officer for two organizations. Additionally, he has been the Commander of American Legion Post 177 for 15 years and is an avid professional bass fisherman, currently serving as Vice President of his local fishing club.

While many know of his love for bass fishing and his wife of 38 years, Cheryl Conway Griffith, Army Major, Retired, from Indiana, few are aware that President Griffith is an ordained Deacon at Living Truth Christian Center. He hosts the "Morning Motivation" Podcast each Tuesday. Prayer, communion, and motivational words set the tone for the day for church and at-large community members. President Griffith also considers himself a "Blue Tooth [even New Jack City] DJ," a reflection of his multifaceted interests.

During his tenure, President Griffith was responsible for a successful two-pronged effort to raise funds. He used giving levels based on military officers' ranks. He also hosted a Virtual Homecoming in May 2021 to break the hold of the COVID-19 pandemic. The two efforts enabled the COA to exceed \$100,000 in overall COA fundraising and donations with some donors giving \$10,000.

Additionally, the online adaptation created an opportunity for the COA to use accessibility, inclusivity, and creative engagement to minimize health risks and event costs yet maintain the celebratory spirit. Recorded content allow those who missed the live event to connect from anywhere to enjoy highlights and relive memories.

**2023 – Present: Curtis Lindesay, 1989, Military Intelligence.** President Lindesay was a member of the “Bishop Boys,” a group of students that transferred from Bishop College in Dallas, Texas to UAPB where he completed the UAPB Army ROTC program. His military and-post military journey began with inspiration from his stepfather’s military tour in Germany during the early 1980s. This experience, preceding his time at Bishop College and UAPB, motivated President Lindesay to join the Army and explore the world beyond his home in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. After serving 28 years in the active Army, President Lindesay joined Leidos Holdings, Inc., a prominent American defense, aviation, and technology company as a government contractor. Presently, he serves as an Intelligence Instructor at the Air Force Cyber Information Operations Squadron in Texas. His extensive military background enables him to mentor the next generation of intelligence professionals, teaching new Air Force analysts how to support cyber operations.

As UAPB’s president, President Lindesay prioritizes continuous improvement, upholding traditions, and supporting the Golden Lion Battalion. He revamped the 10-year-old COA website, leveraged social media for communication, and refined association bylaws and scholarship programs. Additionally, he established a Historian Committee to document the COA’s achievements and milestones. His commitment to service extends beyond the military, as he also serves God as an Ordained Minister, enriching the lives of those around him.

#### **Financial Update:**

Our treasury reports serve as a testament to the COA’s financial well-being. We diligently track yearly growth, showcasing our responsible management of resources. Thanks to the generosity of donors during a robust and ongoing fundraising campaign, our Treasurer oversaw donations surpassing \$100,000 throughout the COA’s existence. During the first two quarters of 2024, the COA demonstrated exceptional financial acumen. We maintained our commitment to supporting cadets facing financial distress while attending UAPB and participating in the GLB. Recently, our scholarship board awarded financial scholarships to three cadets, totaling \$3,000. Since the inception of our scholarship program, the COA has granted 56 scholarships, amounting to \$49,400.

Despite operational expenses and scholarships awarded to GLB cadets, our robust balance remains above \$70,000. Recognizing the importance of prudent financial management, the Board decided to move beyond simple interest rates (ranging from 0.10% to 0.50%) and invest a portion of the balance to safeguard against inflation and banking costs and to allow funds to grow. Our Board wisely allocates a portion of donations into staggered 1-, 2-, and 3-year CDs, consistently earning over 4% (4.10% —4.40%). The Board voted to continue this strategic approach to both earn on COA investments and reflect an unwavering commitment to responsible resource stewardship.

#### **Golden Lion Battalion Cadet Achievements:**

##### **Spring Commissioning Ceremony:**

Four GLB cadets were commissioned as Second Lieutenant during UAPB Spring Graduation in May 2024. Each graduate received a UAPB COA Challenge Coin during the ceremony

Kaylan Akbar, Transportation Corps  
Christopher Blunt, Ordnance Corps  
Antoinette Cunning, Quartermaster Corps  
Tawyne King, Quartermaster Corps

### **UAPB COA Financial Scholarship:**

Three GLB cadets competed and were awarded financial scholarships by the COA Scholarship Board

Ja'Vorie Garrett, Freshman

Ricky Greene, Freshman

Lauren Sanders, Freshman

### **Member Achievements and Community Support**

#### **2024 Veterans Day Observance**

Curtis Cook '70 was guest speaker for the local Veterans Day observance program. Edwin Shumpert ensured support for Curtis and COA support of this event.

#### **UAPB Farewell Program for Chancellor Laurence Alexander, Leaving...His Mark**

Edwin Shumpert '70 and Curtis Cook '70 farewelled Chancellor Alexander and hailed Interim Chancellor Dr. Andrea Stewart to ensure COA presence at this event. Edwin welcomed Dr. Stewart to her interim position, shared information about the COA and provided Dr. Stewart a copy of the UAPB COA 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Souvenir Book.

#### **TAPS: Honoring Our Departed Members**

The TAPS section serves as a solemn tribute to our beloved comrades who have transitioned. Through heartfelt remembrance, we honor their contributions, camaraderie, and lasting impact on Dear Mother and the COA. May their memory inspire us to continue our shared mission with dedication and compassion.

Bobby Danzie, Senior

Dyann Hawkins

Kenzie Wallace