

# MEDIA

## FOR LOVE OF THE GAMES



"When I went to the Academy, school was not much fun," said Ron Terwilliger '63 with a laugh. "The academics were hard, and we had to deal with the academics on our own, without any support services. If you played varsity sports, as I did, you had to make every minute count. During my plebe year I used to sit in my shower after lights-out to finish my homework. However, sports were a bit of a relief valve for me. We would get up at the 0615 bell, go to classes all day and participate in physical activities in the afternoons. For me, playing baseball and basketball was a lot of fun. We had great camaraderie and teamwork, and we had very good teams in both sports. I've always gotten great joy out of sports—either as a participant or a spectator."

Terwilliger's Academy experience—one marked by constant challenge and a commitment to the athletics that provided his break from the Academy routine—went on to shape a life defined by extraordinary professional success that was matched only

by his impact as a philanthropist.

A leading supporter of the Academy since the early days of the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation, Terwilliger has become the largest individual donor in the Academy's history. A recent estate gift, when realized, will bring his lifetime support for the Academy to more than \$52 million. His most recent contributions will fund The Class of 1963Center for Academic Excellence (CAE), endowed by J. Ronald Terwilliger '63 and Classmates, at its current level of operations in perpetuity.

The CAE promotes academic success on the Yard through a wide range of supplemental instruction, group study, tutoring, skill development and writing support services. The CAE has played acritical role in reducing the Academy's academic attrition rate, which has been below three percent in recent years. In the 2018–19 academic year, the CAE recorded 50,602 total visits (1,488 visits per week)—5,500 more than the prior year. Approximately 3,150 unique midshipmen accessed CAE services, including 97 percent of all plebes and 70 percent of students with a 4.0 CQPR, or cumulative quality point ratio. While complete data has not been collected for the 2019-2020 academic year, the CAE has been able to use technology to continue its services during the remote-learning period resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. During the sixweeks of remote learning, the CAE averaged 879 visits per week from more than 55 percent of the Brigade.

The Class of 1963 began its substantial support for the CAE as part of its 50th reunion gift in 2003, and the class has contributed more than \$6 million. More than half the class has donated, and Terwilliger'sgift ensures the critical Center will bear the Class of 1963's name in perpetuity.

"The data is clear about the impact that the CAE has had on midshipman retention and success at the Naval Academy," said Academic Dean and Provost Dr. Andrew Phillips. "The programs offered by the CAE have been essential in enhancing our overall educational effectiveness, and the support of the Class of 1963 and now Ron Terwilliger's support of the CAE as well is absolutely key in sustaining that success. We simply could not do it without them."

For Terwilliger, supporting the CAE is a way to honor class bonds and support the Academy of today—and tomorrow. "Having our class have its name on something as significant as the CAE is a great legacy for our class," said Terwilliger. "We experienced a lot together from 1959–1963. We went to Vietnam together. It's rewarding to me to help cement this legacy for the Class of '63."

Terwilliger has also provided funding to build the Ron Terwilliger Center for Student-Athletes, slated to be formally dedicated in November. The Center will feature storytelling and technology designed to educate prospective midshipmen and their families as well as other visitors on the history and opportunities of the Naval Academy. The Center will include a welcome theater and interactive exhibits, as well as an array of state-of-the-art athletic training and rehabilitation equipment.

Terwilliger's first significant gift in support of the Academy is recognized in Terwilliger Brothers Field at Max Bishop Stadium. Both he and his brother, Commander Bruce Terwilliger '64, SCUSN (Ret.), played baseball for the Midshipmen, and Ron Terwilliger remembers that he was aghast when he toured the facility in the early 2000s with Naval Academy Athletic Association Athletic Director Chet Gladchuk and it appeared little had been invested since he and his brother played at the Academy. His gift funded a complete renovation and restoration of the baseball complex.

Shortly thereafter, as part of the Foundation's first fundraising campaign, Terwilliger contributed \$2 million for the renovation and expansion of Navy–Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. The scoreboard in the north end zone bears the Terwilliger Family name as a result.

"Ron is one of the most significant reasons why we have been capable of achieving historic success within the physical mission, and most especially intercollegiate athletics, over the past two decades," said Gladchuk. "He came aboard with a shared vision of what would be necessary to elevate our competitive programs and provided the resources allowing us to quickly achieve number of ambitious strategic initiatives. As a former Academic All-American and one of our most decorated student-athletes, an extraordinary businessman and a Distinguished Graduate of the Academy, Ron clearly understands the road map to winning at every level. He is philosophically inspired by the purest definition of what is a true student- athlete and is extremely proud that his Academy understands the importance of developing our leaders with equitable balance morally, mentally and physically. Ron's legacy at the Academy tells a story of leadership, vision, determination, perseverance, philanthropy and friendship."

### "NO EXPECTATIONS OF WEALTH"

Terwilliger's origins were humble and his path to the Academy indirect. He grew up in Arlington, VA. "We were relatively lower middle-income," he said. "My parents never went to college, we lived in a tiny little house with one car, but fortunately my brother and I were both excellent athletes." Terwilliger received a scholarship to George Washington University in Washington, DC, to play baseball and basketball after graduating from high school at the age of 17.

"In October of my freshman year at George Washington, I woke up with a severe back pain. I couldn't bend over. A doctor confirmed I had a serious back condition," Terwilliger said. The university said he could stay on as a day student, but, took away his room and board until he had returned to participate in varsity athletics.

During his time commuting from Arlington, Terwilliger began receiving interest from the Naval Academy, where a high school baseball opponent of Terwilliger's, Chuck Davis [Lieutenant Colonel Charles Davis '61, USMC (Ret.)], was playing. Davis was an All-American pitcher at Navy, but Terwilliger remembers hitting a home run and a triple off him in high school. Davis' father remembered Terwilliger. "Chuck's dad kept calling my dad, saying, 'Your son has to come to the Academy,'" said Terwilliger. Terwilliger transferred after one year at George Washington to become a plebe in the Class of '63. If the Academy had any concerns about his back, they didn't mention it during his four years as a two-sport athlete.

"I had a great career at Navy in basketball and baseball, and I stood 45thin my class. I told the Navy I wanted to bean aviator, but they said I was not physically qualified. That's when I found out they knew I had a degenerative back condition."

Unable to become an aviator, Terwilliger chose the Supply Corps instead, believing it would offer the best preparation for business should he not make a career in the Navy. After Supply Corps school, he ended up playing basketball for Sublant and then went to submarine school in Groton, CT. After graduation, he ended up in the Nuclear Submarine Supply program, working on a Polaris submarine. Upon leaving the submarine, he was transferred to the Naval Supply Center in Norfolk, VA. While in Norfolk, Terwilliger applied to the Harvard Business School program for Supply Corps officers. Although Harvard admitted him, the Navy designated Terwilliger a first alternate for this program. His military obligation fulfilled, he decided to resign his commission and go back to school.

"I graduated at 29 with a negative\$10,000 net worth, but [I had] a Harvard MBA," he said. His brother, coincidentally, also entered the Supply Corps, and attended Stanford University under Navy sponsorship.

"Probably one of my greatest strengths business-wise is numbers," said Terwilliger. "I understand numbers pretty well; I can feel probabilities, things like that. I took one real estate class at Harvard and it just clicked for me. I figured I could understand real estate investment decisions."

After graduating from HBS, Terwilliger joined a small recreational community development company based in Hilton Head, SC. "We had a fatal flaw in our business strategy, however. The owner of the company didn't have a lot of equity, and consequently we borrowed all the money to do our developments. We used 100-percent leverage, which came back to haunt us. The economy went into recession in 1974 as a result of rising interest rates, and virtually every company Sea Pines owned effectively went bankrupt. After Sea Pines, I went to Dallas for a few years as chief financial officer of a large commercial construction company, but I got bored. A Harvard classmate of mine was running the residential part of Trammell Crow, the leading real estate developer in the United States. I was offered the opportunity to move to Atlanta and start my own business developing residential real estate in the Eastern United States.

"By the time Terwilliger left Trammel Crow Residential as chairman in 2009, he estimated, his company had built more than 250,000 housing units throughout his 30-year tenure. He was named a Naval Academy Alumni Association Distinguished Graduate the same year.

### FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

As Terwilliger's professional success grew, he became increasingly involved in philanthropy. In 2000, Terwilliger joined Habitat for Humanity's International board. Habitat is a global nonprofit housing organization that supports low-income homeownership. Terwilliger served as chairman from 2008 to 2009 and has continued on the board to champion international fundraising. After stepping down as chair, he made a \$100 million legacy commitment to Habitat for Humanity International. Terwilliger has also served over the past 20 years on many nonprofit boards and has chaired the Urban Land Institute, Enterprise Community Partners and the "I Have a Dream" Foundation.

"As I got into my mid-50s and started accumulating meaningful wealth, I began to try to figure out what God's plan for me was," he said. "I know many wealthy families leave all their money to their children, but I thought that was probably more harmful to the children than not. I intend to provide enough for my family, but I have a lot more than I think is needed to support them. As time passed, I decided to leave the balance of my estate to charity. Since I had made my money in housing, it seemed like a natural place to give back. Housing is foundational for families and for family growth. The adjacencies to housing are health and education, and giving low-income families a decent, affordable and safe home enables economic mobility, giving children an opportunity for a good education that provides them the opportunity to pull themselves and their families out of multi-generational poverty."

Terwilliger's philanthropic support for the Naval Academy came soon after.

"Up until about the year 2001, nobody really asked me to support the Academy," said Terwilliger. "The only thing I did related to the Naval Academy was give money to support the children of classmates killed in Vietnam to provide for their education.

"But when today's Naval Academy Foundation got off the ground in 2001under the leadership of Admiral Charles Larson '58, USN (Ret.), and Captain George Watt '73, USNR (Ret.), Terwilliger was one of the first to get on board as a donor and volunteer leader. Vice Admiral John Ryan '67, USN (Ret.), was Superintendent at that time and instrumental in getting the Foundation off the ground. Terwilliger served as a member of the Naval Academy Foundation Board of Directors from 2002 to 2009 and began his second term in 2013.

Not long after Terwilliger reconnected with the Academy and Navy Athletics, Chet Gladchuk joined the Naval Academy Athletic Association as athletic director. He and Terwilliger became fast friends, and Gladchuk was instrumental in helping Terwilliger develop the ideas for the Ron Terwilliger Center for Student-Athletes.

"Chet and I visited some of the major southeastern universities in the country in an attempt to understand how they celebrated student athletes," Terwilliger said. "Sadly, we discovered that athletes were celebrated solely for their athletic excellence. We didn't get the feeling that the universities had any commitment to ensuring that their athletes would graduate, much less graduate with the skills needed to support themselves. I feel very different about the Naval Academy. If you're a varsity athlete at the Naval Academy, you don't get a break on academics. You take the same classes everyone else does. The Academy has an intense commitment to the moral, mental and physical development of all midshipmen. I wanted to celebrate that."

Terwilliger remains closely connected to the Academy today as a Naval Academy Foundation board member and Athletic and Scholarship Programs Trustee—and a grandparent. Midshipman Will Meshad '23, stepson of Terwilliger's daughter, is a plebe and a member of the golf team—one who Terwilliger knows uses the CAE regularly.

"For the past 20 years, I have spent a lot of time at the Academy, and I am always impressed in the quality of the young people I have the opportunity to meet. My belief is that the Academy keeps getting better, and consequently produces increasingly outstanding young midshipmen who demonstrate the moral, mental and physical attributes needed to become 'leaders to serve the nation.'"



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