



## Donors

**Robert and Karen Reuter**

**15524 Heiberg, Harrison**

**Howell D.**

**November 11, 1925 - November 30,  
1990**



**MEMORIAL ARTICLE  
Published Assembly Jun '94**

**Harrison Howell Dodge Heiberg Jr.  
No.15524 Class of 1946**  
Died 30 November 1990 in  
Alexandria, Virginia, aged 65 years.  
Interment: United States Air Force  
Academy Cemetery, Colorado  
Springs, Colorado.

Hei Heiberg set out to be a military planner from birth. To ensure that his birthday would forever be observed as a holiday, complete with parades, he made his premature appearance at Camp Marfa, Texas on 11 November 1925. Weighing four pounds, two ounces, including the blanket, he spent his first days in a dresser drawer, so unprepared were his parents for this early arrival. However, by the age of six months, he was ready for his first and only four-year tour at West Point, albeit under the sponsorship of his father, newly posted to the Department of Mathematics. Hei shared his nickname with his father (USMA Class of '19), and seemed destined to follow in the Cavalry tradition started by his grandfather, Elvin (USMA 1896). He was on a horse before he could walk, and growing up at Forts Knox, Riley, Leavenworth and Huachuca allowed him the opportunity to acquire a respectable number of horse show trophies and ribbons. However, a whole new world opened up after his first flight in an airplane at the age of fourteen when he was living in the Philippines with his mother and stepfather (Captain James B. Edmunds). He completed his first two years of high school in Manila and returned to the States in 1940 to spend a year at Fort Knox, Kentucky with his father, step-mother and sister Heide. He joined the Edmundses in 1941 to spend his senior year at Western High School in Washington, DC with first cousins Lee (USMA '46) and Wolcott (USMA '50) Parmly. He attended Sullivan's Preparatory School after graduation while joining cousin Lee in treading the Halls of Congress seeking political appointments to West Point. It was a challenge for a couple of Army Brats, but their perseverance paid off, and the two joined the Class of 1946 on 1 July 1943.

Another dream was fulfilled with Hei's selection as an Air Cadet. His roommates, Fred Thomas and Brooke Albert, were both New Englanders and several years older than Hei. They called him "the Kid," subjected him to open windows on cold winter nights and maintained a paternal watch over his blossoming romance with Mimi Branson, a former schoolmate at Western

High and "girl almost-next-door!" Hei and Mimi were engaged Christmas of yearling year. He graduated a second lieutenant with his wings in the Army Air Corps.

Hei and Mimi were married on 2 September 1946 in Texas. They honeymooned in Arizona as Hei made his transition to fighter aircraft. Orders to Germany in January 1947 meant the first of many separations, but Mimi arrived in Weisbaden in time for their first anniversary. Hei's first flying assignment was with the newly activated 86th Fighter Wing at Neuburg. His duties included flying escort for the Berlin Airlift, ferrying planes to Turkey and Iran and patrolling the eastern European border. Only by accident was he home the week his daughter Karen was born in September 1948.

After Hei returned to Washington, DC shortly before the birth of H. H. D. III (Hal) in April 1950, his professional life was shadowed by being medically grounded. What was later determined to be an incorrect diagnosis by a flight surgeon in Germany was nevertheless repeatedly upheld by medical boards that refused to review the initial finding. However, life had to go on, and by then Hei had another goal in mind. The Air Force Academy was rapidly becoming more than just a dream, and Hei was determined to be in on the ground floor. When he arrived in Denver, Colorado in September 1954, Hei became the first officer to sign in as a member of the Commandant's staff. He wrote the order that established the Air Force Academy and swore in, individually, the first class of cadets on 11 July 1955 before the public ceremony. Through a twist of fate, he also trained the first falcon mascot and became an internationally known falconer over the next twenty years. His extensive falconry library and collection have been donated to the World Center for the Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho, and his slides and written history are now part of the Air Force Academy library. His first Academy tour also reaped another benefit: a sympathetic flight surgeon who went to bat for him, resulting in Hei's return to flying status. With six years to make up, Hei lost no time. In his next assignment to Osan, Korea, he qualified as an instructor pilot in five different aircraft and accumulated enough flying hours to receive his senior pilot rating with his contemporaries.

The following years back in CONUS brought many challenges: new aircraft qualifications, a Master of Arts in diplomatic history from the University of Maryland and completion of the Air War College course as a distinguished graduate. The highlight of the Air War College tour was the birth of James Lewis in October 1965.

Hei returned to the Air Force Academy in 1966 as Deputy Commandant for Plans and Operations. With the Vietnam War escalating, Hei volunteered and received orders to Vietnam in 1968. He served as commander of the advisory team to the Vietnamese Air Force 33rd Tactical Wing and flew combat missions with the Vietnamese Air Force. He returned to the States for assignment with the Military Airlift Command in California, where he frequently flew back into Vietnam as a command pilot in C-141s and C-5s. In 1972, he was reassigned to Headquarters, Military Airlift Command, where he remained until his retirement as a colonel in 1976.



Civilian life was as rewarding for Hei as his previous thirty years of active duty had been. He was Assistant to the Director of Mount Vernon during the two-year Bicentennial observance and served six years as Vice President, Armed Forces Benefit Association. His final retirement in 1984 gave Hei and Mimi the opportunity to devote more time to the Episcopal church, in which they were licensed Eucharistic Ministers, and to their 44-foot cruiser, Vandrefalk. They both joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary and became deeply involved in teaching boating safety and performing operational patrols on Chesapeake Bay. Hei was elected commander of the Northern Virginia Power Squadron and was a flotilla commander in the Auxiliary. He went on to become a division captain in the Auxiliary and had been elected rear commodore (thereby regaining his "eagles" in Coast Guard insignia) when he was diagnosed with bone cancer. Hei died on 30 November 1990. He was survived by his wife Mimi; a daughter, Karen; two sons, Hal and James; and a grandson, Grady.

Although a memorial service was held at Fort Meyer, Virginia, Hei was interred at the Air Force Academy, in accordance with his wishes, on 4 June 1991, the forty-fifth anniversary of his graduation from West Point. In a fitting gesture, the current director of the mascot program at the Air Force Academy brought a young prairie falcon to the graveside service to join family and friends in their farewell to a "founding father" of a great institution that traces its roots and traditions to the United States Military Academy.

**HEIBERG AS SEEN BY A YOUNGER FALCONER**  
**A Tribute by Donald A. Garlock, Jr.**

When Col. Heiberg took office as Eastern Director in May of 1962, NAFA was in its infancy. Many of NAFA's old-timers tell me about the early days of our organization and of working with Hei — I love those stories. Although I did not know Col. Heiberg until more recent years, I am one of the few who had the privilege of working closely with him in his later years. And work we did! We spent hundreds of hours — researching, editing, reminiscing — and in spite of failing health, Hei remained feisty, dedicated, tireless, meticulous and firm. He had a love for and knowledge of NAFA unlike any other, and right up to his last day he maintained a NAFA file that rivals the Archives. When I asked him for specific documentation from, for example, a letter written in 1963, he had his hands on it pronto.

Perhaps the greatest single contribution Col. Heiberg made was co-authoring, with Jack Young, a nearly complete rewrite of NAFA's original Constitution and Bylaws. The rewritten document has admirably withstood the rigors of nearly 30 years. When President Jim Weaver charged me with updating and reprinting the Constitution and Bylaws, I called Hei for help. Together we embarked on a two-and-one-half year task. Hei's intimate knowledge of NAFA from its inception and his impeccable records ensured that the document has retained all of its original integrity and accuracy while incorporating all the subsequent amendments. Without Col. Heiberg, the task would have been nearly impossible. Over the course of the project, Hei and I developed a friendship and a mutual respect.

The Constitution & Bylaws are appropriately dedicated to "the co-author and guardian of this document," a recognition Hei did not expect. My reward for the work involved is knowing that he saw the project come to fruition and that he, in a small way, was acknowledged for a lifetime of service to the North American Falconers Association. I am privileged to have known and worked with Hei Heiberg, and I shall miss him.



**HEI HEIBERG — IN MEMORIAM**  
**by S. Kent Carnie**

The last Issue of Hawk Chalk contained a brief announcement of the passing of Col. H.H.D. (Hei) Heiberg, a name too little known among many of NAFA's newer members. Assigned at the Air Force Academy while it was being established, Hei's duties included organizing the Academy's original falconry program. Falconry found a kindred spot in Hei's soul and was with him the rest of his days. Like many in the military, Hei's flying was often constrained by his duties and assignments; but to say that falconry was always in Hei's life, with or without a bird, would be an understatement!

Upon its founding, Hei was NAFA's first Eastern Director. The last Hawk Chalk listed the other positions he held while in NAFA. No one has held more, and he held most of these in those few years between 1962 and 1968! With Jack Young, he also revised NAFA's original constitution into the basis for our present governing document. Very early in NAFA's existence, Hei made a special effort to insure that we would be perceived as more than just some hunter-user group but rather as a body of environmentally oriented and concerned sportsmen seeking the best for our raptor heritage. He will be remembered, particularly, for his staunch opposition to commercial traffic in wild-caught raptors and in development of NAFA's early positions on legalization and commercialism.

Perhaps even more important than the incredible amount of work he did for the Association, Hei exerted a strong moral force representing honesty and integrity. In every sense of the term, Hei was, truly, "an officer and a gentleman"; an officer by act of Congress (based on his West Point education), a gentleman by nature! For those critical earliest years, Hei was a pillar of strength and honesty who attempted to insure that NAFA "DID" instead of just "SAID"! He set an example that contributed much to the reputation for integrity that we enjoy today.

Hei kept careful and complete records of all his NAFA activities. This, coupled with his active participation in

early efforts to preserve NAFA's records at McGill University, has been of great benefit as we now assemble NAFA's official corporate records at the Archives of Falconry. Of the NAFA materials transferred to the TAF from McGill, a great percentage were Heiberg's records. He, thus, made this additional, very tangible contribution to the efforts of our Association.

Although playing a less visible role in NAFA in recent years, Hei continued, literally to his last days, as our Parliamentarian and as the Constitution Committee, a contribution recognized in the most recently published copy of that document. Even after learning of his terminal condition, Hei thoughtfully provided for our history. Not only reorganizing his remaining records, Hei painstakingly labeled and indexed some 400 of his Kodachrome slides to enhance the historic value of that collection. His NAFA papers are being integrated into NAFA's Central Records. The remainder (mostly predating NAFA's formation) will comprise the Heiberg Collection at the Archives of Falconry — as will his equipment and those portions of his library not already duplicated in the TAF collections. Through all of this his widow, Mimi, has thoughtfully given of her own efforts to insure the proper utilization of this legacy Hei has bequeathed to all future generations of American falconers.

He is missed. Clearly, it will be a long time 'til we see his like again. Keep 'em flying up there!

