



USAF Academy Men's & Women's Gymnastics Team Funds



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Women's Team MVP, 1980

"Short Set" Update – 2016/01/06

USAF Academy Gymnastics Alumni, Parents, and "Friends of USAFA Gymnastics,"

We wanted to share with you what Brigadier General (retired) Orwyn "O" Sampson recently wrote after we discussed "how USAFA Gymnastics impacted your life" during one of our campaign teleconferences. In 1959, "O" graduated from UCLA where he competed in gymnastics. He has three academic degrees (BS, MS, and PhD) in the study of human movement. In addition to USAFA, his assignments include Nellis AFB, the University of Oregon, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He spent 25 of his 32 years of active service at USAFA retiring as Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biology. Beyond the classroom he served in multiple capacities to include Freshman Gymnastics Coach (1963-64) and Interim Head Gymnastics Coach (1968-69) when Coach Karl Schier deployed to Vietnam. He was later the academic advisor to the gymnastics team from 1973-1992. The following is "O" Sampson's verbatim story.

"I wanted to give you an update on one of the best parts of my life that you and I share—and that is the sport of gymnastics. First, let me tell you my story and then please think through what gymnastics meant to you.

When I was eleven I got polio. The doctors told my parents to get me involved in sports in order to regain my strength. My father and my two older brothers and I dug a hole and built a swimming pool with a diving board. In addition, one block from our house was a city park where an assistant playground director was a college gymnast, named Wally Bickmore. Wally was like a Pied Piper with us little kids and taught us to do rolls and headstands and somersaults until over the years we became pretty good. We even developed some circus-style acts and performed for parties and on a couple of TV shows. And a few of us went on to college and got scholarships and did pretty well.

We learned more than gymnastics from Wally. We learned a disciplined life—getting good grades in school, caring for our bodies, respecting others, etc. And, there were benefits. We got scholarship offers, good educations, and we learned a lot. I even had an opportunity to go to a brand new school starting in Denver called the United States Air Force Academy, but I turned it down because "I knew I wasn't going to be a career military officer and, since it was a brand new school, I knew they wouldn't have much of a gymnastics team." Well, I was wrong. I spent 33 years in uniform and was the coach at the Air Force Academy. (I guess my spiritual gift is not prophecy!)

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THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
ENDOWMENT

By the way, by going to UCLA I met the love of my life (Diane and I have now been married 55+ years) and I became enamored with the scientific study of the human body. Among other things, I learned that we have on the order of 100-trillion cells with great diversity and exquisite order. And, they all came from one! (And if you don't think that's a miracle, you need your head examined. It helped me to more deeply appreciate our origin.)

At that time, ROTC training was mandatory at land-grant schools for all male students for two years, so my buddies and I signed up for Air Force (largely because we learned that Army and Navy cadets had to drill with rifles, and Air Force cadets did not!) Also, in order to maintain my draft deferment status so I could continue my education, I elected to sign up for two more years of ROTC, get a commission and serve three years on active duty. Well, the rest is history. After two years at Nellis AFB, I got a call from the Pentagon asking if I wanted an assignment to the United States Air Force Academy to teach in the Athletic Department and to coach gymnastics. Well, you know the rest.

Now, I tell that story because you have a similar tale and yours also includes a fascination (even a love-affair?) with gymnastics. And, what a great ride it has been, right? And we take great pride in that heritage.

But, that heritage has come under fire with the possibility of losing several sports at the Academy, unless outside funds can be generated. A number of us have been led to contribute to the USAFA Gymnastics Funds. And, we'd like you to consider the same."

As you can tell, "O" writes from the heart. No doubt you can sense what an incredible impact he had on cadets, Airmen, and countless others throughout his life. We're indeed blessed to have him lead within our Campaign as an Honorary Chair.

On a different note and as a closing comment, we hope you received the "USAFA 60-Year Gymnastics Reunion" email dated December 22nd. Remember, as we mentioned in last month's "Short Set" email, for those of you who have donated to any of the USAFA Gymnastics Funds since 2007 there will be Donor-related activities within the Reunion agenda. To register for the Reunion and those Donor events, click on the link in the bottom of this "Short Set" transmittal email. We look forward to seeing you there!

Hope that all is well with 2016 – GO FALCONS!

Mark

**Mark Zamzow, Major General (retired), USAF
USAFA Gymnast and Coach, Class of '78
Co-Director, USAFA Gymnastics Funds Campaign**

Kim

**Dr Kim Broughton
USAFA Gymnast and Coach, Class of '03
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