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Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., USN (Ret.)
interviewed by Colonel Paul T. Ringenbach,
USAF (Ret.) June 1, 2001

Hughes, Wayne P. Jr.; Ringenbach, Paul T.

United States Air Force Academy (USAF)

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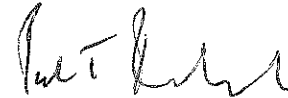
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ATT: Gary LaValley
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Dear Gary,

I have enclosed the transcript of the oral history interview that I conducted with Captain Wayne P. Hughes, USN (Ret.), USNA '52. I have also inclosed a copy of the release for the interview signed by Captain Hughes. To help make the interview more useful, I have included a couple of things that Captain Hughes mentioned during his interview.

Best wishes, and if I run across other USNA material, I'll let you know.

Sincerely,



Paul T. Ringenbach
Colonel, USAF, (Ret.)

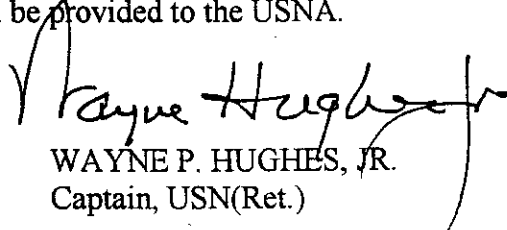
Enclosures

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Know that I, Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., USN (Ret.) have participated in an Oral history interview with Colonel Paul T. Ringenbach, USAF(Ret.) on June 1, 2001. It contains my best recollection of events and experiences, which may be of historical significance to the USAFA and the USAF.

I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey and assign all right, title and interest in the memoirs recorded on audio cassette tapes or transcriptions to the United States Air Force Academy, acting on behalf of the United States of America, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs and assigns all ownership, right, title, and interest therein to the USAFA.

I understand that all of these tapes and transcribed manuscripts resulting this interview will be considered public records, open to inspection by anyone requesting access to them. I also understand that a copy will be provided to the USNA.


WAYNE P. HUGHES, JR.
Captain, USN(Ret.)

DATED 7/23/01

**Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., USN (Ret.) interviewed by
Colonel Paul T. Ringenbach, USAF (Ret.) June 1, 2001**

PR I'd like you to tell me about your own background and how you ended up at the Naval Academy.

WH I was a 1952 graduate of the Naval Academy. About in 1955, I wrote an article and sent it off to the Naval Institute, but it was not published in its *Proceedings*. In it, I said there were only two kinds of graduates - - those who never want to see the place again and those who want to come back and straighten out the Naval Academy. The Institute passed it over to Rear Admiral William Smedberg who was the Superintendent of the Naval Academy. He was trying to reform the curriculum. You probably have a sense of that from my *Shipmate* article. The study-recite, 19th Century Academy curriculum and perspective was how the school functioned. He asked the Institute not to publish the article, but the Naval Institute paid me for it anyway. He then wrote to me and told me that it was time for me to put up and shut up so come back to the Academy for your next tour of duty. I had put in for post graduate school and so I withdrew that application and got orders to the Academy.

PR When did you actually get to the Academy?

WH It was the summer of 1957. I taught naval history and diplomatic history part-time and I worked part-time under Captain Anton "Tony" Gallaher. He was the Secretary of the Academic Board which was the equivalent of the Dean of Academic Programs. In fact, the title was later changed to something like that. The Secretary of the Academic Board and Admiral Smedberg really couldn't get the Academic Board to do anything drastic. I guess I wrote about this too. It was a case where 12 strong-willed people were timid in changing what was supposedly a proven system of academics. The Air Force

connection is, somewhere about then, in 1958 probably, I went out to the Air Force Academy and was briefed on the Air Force Academy program. It was very much - - I blush to say now, I loved it because it had courses in philosophy and ethics. My take on the Naval Academy was that we were too engineering-oriented and we needed more of that kind of social sciences and humanities. I would not say that any more, but that was my belief at the time. So I was most impressed with the Air Force curriculum. By then, I guess they had moved up from Lowry because I visited the new plant at Colorado Springs.

PR Were you the Assistant Secretary of the Academic Board at that time?

WH That's right. That was my title. I was just a lieutenant working for a captain. As Assistant Secretary I was involved in a lot of routine stuff such as getting failing students ready to appear to have their academic standing reviewed - - to see whether to discharge them or turn them back to the next class. There was a civilian who was a professional academic. He was an advisor and he was also terribly conservative. He wasn't conservative as far as the indoctrination of the plebes in Bancroft Hall was concerned, but he wanted to eliminate some of what he called hazing. Some of it was hazing, but it was "good for us." He wanted to reform the academic programs too. I don't recall his name. Nothing happened. Next year, Smedberg moved on to become Chief of Naval Personnel. I think he may have relieved Admiral Holloway. Holloway had conceived of the Holloway Plan for Naval ROTC to supplement the regular corps. This is the CNO's father, J.L. Holloway, Jr. So Smedberg left and Rear Admiral Charles L. Melson became the new Superintendent. He was an austere, cold man who was difficult to get close to as

opposed to Smedberg who was very warm and friendly. Melson came in and terrorized the Academic Board, but he was also frustrated and couldn't get anything done.

PR Your article said that Melson added non-credit, voluntary courses in the evening.

WH That could be -- in the 58-59 time frame. But, there was no break in the lock-step curriculum yet. Then Gallaher went back to sea and a new Secretary of the Academic Board arrived, Captain William D. Brinkloe. He was extraordinary because he was an EDO. He came in with an opposite view on the nature of the reforms from me, and frankly, he was right. He wanted to strengthen the engineering programs. He wanted to get away from things like the study of the boilers that a technical school would teach. He wanted to teach more of the theory of thermodynamics, heat transfer and fluid mechanics. Well, that was possible within the framework that existed. He was first the chairman of the Marine Engineering department and started to do that in his department. Then Melson saw him as forceful and knowledgeable and brought him up to be Secretary of the Academic Board. Then things started to happen because this side of the curriculum was now actually being charged. We still had the lock-step curriculum however, where everyone took the same subjects. But the subjects now were taught more like an undergraduate college program in engineering. There was a lot of talk at the time about how we could give the cadets more social sciences and humanities which was my slant and the civilian's. Also we could teach less in a prep-school way, not with weekly grades, but let the teachers teach like college teachers. This was exceedingly popular with the faculty, but they did not want to give up anything. Something had to give in order for the curriculum to get more flexible. Two things happened. Brinkloe persuaded the Superintendent who persuaded the Academic Board to go for electives and validation.

It was at that time that I wrote memo to the Superintendent that said two things. One, as soon as you have validation, you're going to have third classmen going to class with plebes and even second class cadets going to school with plebes. And the whole concept of discipline as we know it will change. There's no way you can march to class. You can't march in cohorts because the cadets will be all mixed up. That is going to revolutionize not only the academic program, but also the whole system of discipline. I did not say that this was a bad thing, but I did say that this would be inevitable. It was an internal memorandum from me to the Superintendent. It's somewhere in the files.

Professors John A. Fitzgerald and Roger D. Little who were writing something about the Academy ran across it and talked to me a bit about it. They published an article on the USNA curriculum and faculty. There is another peculiar thing that I published in a *Shipmate*, our alumni magazine, - - well maybe I can dig that out for you. The most boring thing that I did of all three articles was the one in the *Proceedings* because that was sort of the party line. It was okay and all true, but not very catchy like the *Shipmate* article was. The *Shipmate* article by the way, I had written a year and a half earlier than it was published, because the Superintendent, Admiral Melson, wouldn't allow me to publish it until after he left. Meanwhile, Brinkloe, as Secretary of the Academic Board introduced validation and electives. The first thing, then was pointing out the effect on the non-academic side of Naval Academy, discipline and moral, and the whole system in Bancroft Hall. The second thing I said to the Superintendent was that we had an organization that made it very difficult to change the curriculum. (I think there was a flavor of this in one of the two articles.) This was the power of the Academic Board. The Superintendent had one vote and the 12 members of the Academic Board had one

vote each. They would look around and see if they had a majority and they would vote for "no change." So the new proposed structure had divisions. There would be 4 divisions, each headed by a captain, in which the departments would reside. Each of these division heads would have one vote and the Superintendent would have 3 votes. Then he sent this reorganization, which had to be approved by the Navy, over to Admiral Smedberg along with an explanation of why he wanted to do this. When that was approved, then the door was open. From that grew validation, electives, and majors. That was about the time that I left in 1960. Oh, one other thing that was pertinent. Brinkloe was very capable and after a year, he moved. Then Captain John Victor Smith came. Smith was the son of Holland Smith. Victor Smith had a different personality from the Marine General but he was just as forceful. He had been the head of the Ordnance and Gunnery Department and he had been one of the old guard. He was extremely reluctant to modernize ordnance and gunnery which was also more like a training program than an education in the fundamentals of ordnance. Well, Melson did a brilliant thing. He brought him up and made him the Secretary of the Academic Board, under his thumb, and gave him the responsibility of executing the new plans that were coming along. So with or without his heart in it, Smith got behind the Melson initiatives. One thing he was very good at was wheeling and dealing, and as chief of staff, as you will, he was perfect for the job. Besides being Assistant Secretary, I worked in the Superintendent's office part of the time, and spent about 1/3 of my 3 years teaching in the Department of English, History, and Government.

PR At that time did you have a Master's degree?

WH No, I did not. To illustrate the changes that were afoot, when I went to the post-graduate school to take Operations Research as a Master's degree, there were 5 or 6 graduates who went back to the Academy to teach Operations Research. By then, there was a move to require the officer instructors to have Master's degrees. The ops research officers wrote the textbook and began a very fine course in Operations Research. It was very popular and one of the majors. The Math Dept. hated it because nobody was taking a Math Major. Everyone was taking Ops Research which had some math in it. It was real world and practical. Eventually, the Math Dept. persuaded a Superintendent to fold the Ops Research major into the Math Department. The Math Dept then ruled supreme - - but that's just on aside.

PR The first article in 1955, you wrote on your own. On the other two articles, were you encouraged to write them?

WH The one for the *Proceedings*, the Superintendent asked me to write to explain what we were doing. The Superintendent was under a lot of heat from the fleet for wanting to change the system. The retired graduates felt that they survived the Academy system and the war, so they didn't see any reason to change. They didn't realize that education had progressed a lot since they went through it. So the article was to explain the substance of the changes and a little of the rationale. The one that I thought was a kick, and far more forceful was the one in *Shipmate*. As I said before, Melson didn't want that one to go out because he was more politically astute than I was. He had more sense of the old guard and how to win them.

PR In reading all this material and trying to break away, it looks like at all 3 service academies there was a tremendous inertia to leave things as they were. Everything was

fine, we all did great, we're all admirals or generals and we don't need to change anything.

WH That's precisely right.

PR This was true at the Air Force Academy too because most of the early leaders there were West Pointers. McDermott was fighting all this. Before he even got to the Air Force Academy he sold Harmon on the idea of the instructors having a Master's degree in the specialty that they taught. The Air Force ended up with 83% of the initial instructor cadre with Master's degrees which was way above the other 2 academies. During the initial days of the Academy, some officers from the sister service academies went to Colorado to get briefed. You mentioned that you were one. I was wondering how much of this feedback from visitors like yourself was useful in helping overturn the traditionalism at the Naval Academy. Dean Drought was another such visitor who later credited McDermott with his assistance in this.

WH I do think that there was something of a two-way street. They could compare and see what was working and what wasn't. In so far as my visit was concerned, I can't remember. I liked the Naval Academy system that was predominately civilian, who all had Master's degrees and many Ph.D.s. When I went to the Air Force Academy, I believed that the West Point-Air Force military faculty system was inferior to ours, so I didn't pay much attention. It never occurred to me at the time about the need to upgrade the military instructors. My objection was that because the military instructors stayed many years at West Point, many were like civilians in uniform. In Annapolis during 1957-1960, all department chairmen were Navy captains. All number two's were Navy commanders. Then there would be some sort of recognized senior civilian who was

something of an advisor. All these individuals didn't teach at all and that was very similar to what you described to me about West Point. On the other hand, the military would only serve at the Academy for 2 or 3 years and then they would go back to line duty.

PR I read somewhere that in the summer of 1959 the USNA put in an extensive elective program. Midshipmen could take these classes for those that had been validated.

WH That was the Brinkloe effect.

PR Also they could take extra courses over and above the standard curriculum, if their grades were good.

WH We made the decisions in 1958 which were initiated in 1959. That was what broke the dam and allowed majors. Later on, the majors were built into the curriculum. When the whole system started in 1959, it was really intended for the top students or those who had had some college. But it didn't break the lockstep. The next thing that happened was the majors program in the early 1960s.

PR There were 2 or 3 articles that came out in the 1959 time frame-*Time*, etc. in part they were generated by the first Air Force Academy class graduating. The articles talked about the Air Force Academy curriculum being more education than training and the split between the sciences vs. the social sciences and the humanities. The title of the article was "last week the Army and the Navy turned in the same direction." While there may have been no direct lift, the Air Force Academy was newer and had changed. This gave Army and Navy a chance to see another system working.

WH I believe that. What I remember was that the core curriculum had much more liberal arts than at the Naval Academy. I admired it greatly. Here's another factor. After

graduation, the Air Force Academy sent their officers either to flight school or advanced education. Our surface officers went directly to ships. So the pattern was to give them enough basics of systems, ordnance, marine propulsion, navigation, electronics, weather, etc. to serve in their first ship. But only a small fraction of graduates went to ships.

Those who went into aviation, the Marine Corps, the Supply Corps, or submarines all had extensive additional schooling. Later changes gave more theoretical work.

PR It was really a shift from preparing a cadet for his duty assignment to preparing a cadet for a career.

WH That's exactly right. We were getting so diverse, however, that if we'd done that we'd have chosen Marines after 2 years and had a separate Marine indoctrination at the Academy. But we didn't. We made the decision for a career in the last semester of the last year.

PR It reflects that the leadership of the Navy were line officers of the fleet and the Naval Academy prepared the officers well for what they considered to be the right thing. They didn't think about all the rest of the requirements of the fleet and of the Navy.

WH That's true.

PR They were focusing in on what they considered to be the core of the Navy. To them, the real important part of the Navy was being taken care of with the current system so why do we have to change anything?

WH That's right. You've got it right.

PR It's kind of an amazing story of how the academies were able to overcome so much tradition and conservatism.

WH On the one hand it is amazing that we were so slow in doing it. On the other hand it was amazing that we finally broke through. I think that the very fact that the Air Force Academy had been created and was doing things differently, even if we did not know precisely what, gave us an incentive. Those who knew that this was happening at the Air Force Academy had an incentive to try to change. It was our impression at the time that they were not only going to teach more liberal and more fundamental education, but they would teach it in a more college-like fashion.

PR I ran into an article in the *New York Times* in 58 or 59 that talked about numbers of applications. In that particular year, the number of applications for the Air Force Academy was far greater than West Point and Annapolis. The article was raising the question of why? I think one reason was different basic admissions systems. The other implication of the article was that the Air Force Academy was looking academically more like a regular college, offering electives, etc. and this was more attractive to prospective students.

WH Don't overlook that flying was a sexy choice. But, I think that the Air Force Academy had a more mature-looking academic program.

PR I wouldn't like to try to use ops research techniques to look at this type of data.

WH No, it's pretty subtle and subjective. So McDermott, you say, was forward looking and decisive and had the power to make the changes?

PR He eventually got the power, but first worked behind General Harmon. The first Dean was transferred. He got a negative recommendation from the accreditation folks.

WH The accreditation issue is another curiosity. We gave a Bachelor of Science degree. We wanted to be engineering-accredited. It was a big deal to get an engineering

accreditation and, Brinkloe wanted that. That was another of the reasons that we had to reform the way we taught. We did have such an intensive program we could squeeze it in eventually for engineering majors.

PR The Air Force Academy also sought that engineering accreditation.

WH I think the third academy probably created a more obvious need for the academy Superintendents to get together regularly to coordinate. Both Smedberg and Melson wanted to make changes, but they weren't sure what. I think that Brinkloe deserves the lion's share of credit for showing what could be done and breaking the dam. He was the only Secretary not to be a sea-going line officer.

PR One Navy Admiral said something to McDermott that he was unhappy about the validation of courses, etc. because it would mess up the graduation order of merit. He said that McDermott may not know what this meant for the Navy, but the ships at sea proceeded by the graduate order of merit of the commanding officers.

WH That was the old guard talking. Your class standing determined the lineal order of when you graduated. If you were one place ahead of the other guy, and you went to sea, and you were both captains, then the one who was higher in class standing at the time of graduation was the tactical commander, and senior in command. But that was more important in, say, 1900, than in 1950 because most graduates served in ships.

PR Are you still teaching?

WH I teach twice a year at the Naval Postgraduate School and advise thesis students. Military graduate students are mature and we pay them so they don't have to moonlight to make ends meet. There are no better students to teach, anywhere.

PR It looks to like you had a significant input on change at the Naval Academy when you were there because of your articles and your position.

WH For a young lieutenant, I was in the right place at the right time. Believe it or not, in all this I was pretty cautious and conservative. Bill Brinkloe knew what to do. I just could see good ideas when they were visible and nudge and encourage.

PR But it also looks like you had the respect of the three Superintendents and the Academic Dean. Also being closer to the graduates, being the Class of 1952, you probably wielded influence way out of proportion to your rank and your status. The Supt. did ask you to write the article and did send you to the Air Force Academy to see what was going on.

WH I didn't think of it that way at the time, but maybe they did listen. It was a great place to be at the right time. If you need anymore, or want to review the bidding, I think you have my NPS phone numbers.

PR What I'll do is get this transcribed and get your changes. Then it will go into the Air Force Academy archives.

WH I hope that you will share this with the Naval Academy too. I will also see if I can locate the 1955 article.

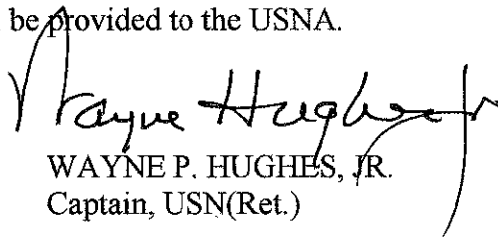
PR I will absolutely. Thank you very much for your time.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

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