

# —LUCKY— NO. 39

## Gen. Caine selected for honorary AOG membership

By Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steven A. Simon '77

**O**n Feb. 22, 2022, the Association of Graduates conferred honorary membership on Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Philip D. Caine, the first permanent professor ever appointed in the Commandant of Cadets' organization.

Gen. Caine's extraordinary career directly paralleled the establishment and rise of the Air Force Academy, where he served for more than two-thirds of his 37-year active-duty career.

His Air Force career started in the same city and at nearly the same time as the Air Force Academy itself. In June 1955, the track athlete completed his studies at the University of Denver with a bachelor's degree and as a distinguished graduate of AF-ROTC. A few miles north, the Academy opened its doors at Lowry Air Force Base a month later.

In October 1955, Phil Caine and his wife of one year, Doris, attended the first Academy football game, coincidentally against DU. The Falcon freshmen defeated the Pioneers' frosh 34-18. Speaking at his AOG honorary member induction ceremony, Gen. Caine acknowledged some mixed emotions while watching his alma mater play his host service but admitted he was an Air Force fan at that time. He has remained a fan to this day.

In December 1955, he entered active duty and attended pilot training at Vance

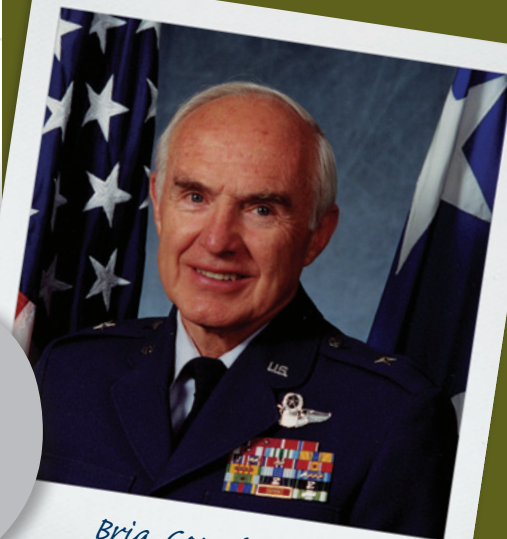
Air Force Base in Oklahoma, with a follow-on assignment to Mather Air Force Base, California. Over his career, he would amass 4,500 flying hours.

In 1961, Caine attended Stanford University under Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) sponsorship to obtain his master's degree in history. Two years later, he was assigned to the Air Force Academy Department of History. He would barely leave the Academy or Colorado Springs after that.

In fact, for the rest of his career, he was away from the Academy for only four short assignments. He returned to Stanford in 1964 for a two-year course of study that resulted in his Ph.D. in U.S. diplomatic history; in 1969, he went to Vietnam, where he spent a year; he also left USAFA, bound for Washington, D.C., for two education-related sabbaticals in 1977 and 1986.

A valuable member of the Academy's faculty, he rose through the ranks to be professor and acting head of the Department of History.

When duty required a shift, however, he willingly agreed. In 1980, then-Superintendent Lt. Gen. Kenneth Tallman asked him to move to the commandant's area to build continuity in the military studies program and make it an academically credible program. While there, he was responsible for a wide variety of programs, such as Professional Military Studies; Cadet Professional Development; Operation Air Force; Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE); Combat Arms Training and Maintenance



Brig. Gen. (Ret.)  
Philip D. Caine



Philip Caine was commissioned  
into the Air Force in 1955.

“

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—Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Philip D. Caine

(CATM); and the flying operations of the 50th Airmanship Training Squadron.

On Jan. 15, 1981, Col. Caine was awarded his permanent professor badge, making him the first permanent professor appointed under the Commandant of Cadets. (All others had been members of the Dean of the Faculty's organization). In the history of the Academy, he was the 39th individual to be singled out for permanent professor status. At the time of his investiture, he was the deputy commandant for military instruction.

Col. Caine became well-known not only around the Terrazzo but also in the athletic complex as well, where he served as a track official and as the swim team faculty adviser.

When he retired on Sept. 1, 1992, with a promotion to the grade of brigadier general, he barely slowed down. A prolific author, he wrote six nonfiction books, four of which deal with World War II pilots. He joined the Falcon Foundation, serving as secretary for several years.

Before 1992 was out, he joined the board of directors and the executive committee for The Friends of the Air Force Academy Library. He served as its secretary as well, before ascending to the presidency in 2010, a position he held until 2020. During his tenure, the Friends added many extremely rare and valuable artifacts, collections and manuscripts.

Gen. Caine was also active in the Association of Graduates, dating back to 1976, when Ginny, the second of his three daughters, was one of the first six females offered appointments for entry with the historic Class of 1980. Less than a year later, she was one of four swim relay team members to become the first Academy women to earn All-American honors.

His reputation was so sterling that, on April 5, 2021, the Association of Graduates' Board of Directors selected Philip Caine as an honorary member. Coincidentally, he was the 39th individual so honored.

Honorary membership may be awarded

to non-graduates who have rendered outstanding and conspicuous service to the Air Force, the Academy and/or the AOG. Honorary members must be recommended by a member of the AOG Board and, at the time of Gen. Caine's selection, were required to receive unanimous acceptance of all directors. Membership is limited to 25 living persons.

The AOG's Honorary Member program launched in 1981, with the selection of the Academy's first Cadet Wing Hostess, Mrs. Gail McComas. Gen. Caine joins such luminaries as Jimmy Doolittle, Robert McDermott, and Joseph and Dorothy Moller.

A few months after Gen. Caine's selection, it was time for his welcoming ceremony. His daughter, Dr. Ginny (Caine) Tonneson '80, a member of the AOG Board of Directors, spoke at the Doolittle Hall event.

"I think he would have made a very good cadet," she suggested. "The fact that he was a distinguished graduate from ROTC, which earned him a regular commission, the fact that he graduated at the top of his pilot training class, the fact that he got his Ph.D. at Stanford — all those things tell me he would have done pretty well here. Unfortunately, he was born four years too early."

Dr. Tonneson and her father both paid tribute to Doris, who attended the



*Gen. Caine also was the starter at USAFA track meets for nearly 20 years.*



*Gen. Caine's wife, Doris, also has been an avid Academy supporter.*

event. Like her husband, she also had a distinguished and trailblazing career in education. She was a teacher, counselor, administrator and charter school liaison in Colorado Springs District 11. As the principal of Coronado High School, she was the first woman to be named a secondary school principal in the district. She also served a year's sabbatical in Washington as a legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Charles Grassley.

In his remarks, Gen. Caine said, "What an honor it is for me to get this award today. Certainly, one of the furthest things from my mind was that I would ever be considered to be an honorary member of the Association of Graduates."

"I've been privileged to be at the Academy for almost 60 years in one capacity or another," Caine continued. "I could never express adequately what an honor it has been for me to work with all of the outstanding people I have worked with, and the cadets especially, to see what they've gone on to do." 