

FEATURE ARTICLES

My Journey

Fred Gregory, Colonel (Ret), USAF

Interviewed By: Douglas Lindsay

Lindsay: Would you mind taking a few minutes and walk us through your journey from the Academy through your experiences as helicopter pilot, test pilot, time with NASA and key in on some of the leadership lessons you learned along the way?

Gregory: I'm glad you used the word journey. A journey is something that I have always focused on that has no particular ending or destination. It is a series of adventures. In most cases, that adventure you just experienced prepares you for the next adventure. For example, a lot of people think that we should go to Mars. I look at Mars as a waypoint, an enabler, for the next adventure. When I went to the Academy, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I did know that flying appeared to be exciting. I will be quite honest with you, I went to the Academy believing it was a flying school and was definitely disappointed when I showed up and there was no airport anywhere near. I was just a young kid. Even though I had a couple of years of college prior to my acceptance and attendance, I really was a young kid and immature. So, my welcome at the Academy by a gentleman, an upperclassman, who believed that I was hard of hearing and could not see him seemed to be rationale for him getting right in front of my face, nose to nose and screaming. That was a wakeup call that convinced me that I was not in an ordinary university. That I was not preparing for a normal civilian career and that this was serious.

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As a as a freshman, a Doolie, you are gathering your thoughts together. I look back at the Academy experience in that first year, and I look at the breadth and depth of the courses that we took. At that earliest point I did not understand the importance of each of those specific areas. It wasn't until years later that I realized that the Academy was smart. It already knew what a great leader or a leader needed to have in his or her portfolio to be successful. I wasn't smart enough to realize that, and I think even in my senior year I was still struggling with what was I going to do when I grew up? I did, however, determine in my senior year that what I would not be doing what everybody else was doing. One of the attributes or traits that I gained from the Academy was to go off on your own. Think about things in perhaps a different way. Do things that others haven't done before. Accept the risk, mitigate the risk, eliminate it if necessary, but the big thing was no matter what you did, have fun doing it.

I think another thing I learned in the Academy was that even though this was a very disciplined facility that had very strict rules, you could still enjoy the experience. You could still enjoy the experience by laughing at things and joking about yourself and gaining the friendships that were available to you. The Academy gave me that multidisciplinary approach to things of science and engineering, but also the liberal arts of economics, law, history, English, and political science. Maybe at that moment I didn't recognize or realize how important they were. I did realize

several years after graduation though with a core in engineering and science and to be able to converse and communicate with lawyers and understand political science, international affairs, public relations, branding and things like that. I came out with an educational background that prepared me, I think better than I would have been if I had gone to a strict liberal arts university. I had gone to two of those actually before it came to the Academy. So, I had a better understanding of what the difference was between a military school such as the Academy and civilian institutions.

I chose helicopters because very few chose them. I was intrigued with rotorcraft. There weren't many of us who decided to go that path, maybe 8 or 9% of our class. I think though, if you ask those of us who went to helicopters, they will tell you that it was exciting and it was fun. I will tell you to this day, if you ask me my favorite aircraft, I will tell you it was a helicopter mainly because we didn't have a lot of rules. Most of it was guidelines and it was fun to go off on your own and fly with a mission and your attempt to be successful at it. The Academy prepared me for those kinds of decisions. The Academy prepared me by giving me the ability to write and to talk. The Academy prepared me as I moved up into the ranks in the Air Force and in NASA of understanding what a program manager was as opposed to a project manager. It taught me the difference and the importance of being a team player and also being the captain of the team. Being able to move freely and comfortably from one role to another.

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The Academy gave me friends, friends for life not only my classmates but those around us and even some of the academic instructors. So, the Academy gave me an awful lot. I think really, it kind of set me up for that journey that I would take. Not knowing where I was going, but I knew I was making good time and having fun.

I went to a helicopter school, and I began volunteering for Vietnam as soon as I graduated from chopper school. I was privileged to go to Vietnam as a rescue helicopter pilot 1966 through 1967. I always went to sleep with a smile on my face because every day we had a role that successfully recovered a down flyer, a Marine squad that had been overcome with heat exhaustion, or a rescue or to support something important. Every day was an adventure but every day gave you self-satisfaction that you had done something for the good of the nation, and certainly for the good of the families of the people that we had recovered. I came back as a helicopter pilot leaving the H-43, the Pedro, and went into the Huey for missile support at Whiteman Air Force Base. We carried the missile crews, cooks, security, and had other miscellaneous roles in support of the Minuteman missile. It was a great place if you wanted flying time. I was flying 70 to 75 hours a month back and forth to these missile sites and other miscellaneous missions. After about a year of it, and I was doing exactly what I loved, which was flying, but every day I got up, I went to work, I briefed, I flew, I came back, I debriefed and went home every day, after day, after day. It was about that time that I realized that when you are in a role like that where you're doing the same thing over and over again with no advancement, you are in a rut. It was at that point I decided that for my career, my goals would be to have fun and make a contribution, which then opened up anything that I wanted to do from that point on. It wouldn't be something specific like wanting to be a Thunderbird pilot or wanting to be a medical doctor. Whatever it was, I had to have fun doing it and make a contribution. When you are in a rut, the fun begins

to wane and that's when I decided I needed to look to something else and try to decide what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I went through a catalog of courses and schools that the Air Force offered. I saw an advertisement for test pilot and I thought, well that's something to do. I applied for test pilot school only because I was getting bored flying every day doing the same thing. The Air Force somehow, and I never quite understood this, came to me and to the other helicopter pilots, and said we're taking you out of helicopters and we are putting you in fixed wing. You get to choose your airplane and your base of assignment. If you chose not to pursue that, then you would leave the Air Force. That was the most amazing offer I had ever had in my life. It took me about a second to decide. Yes, I was going to do this. And two, I was going to go into fighters, which was my original intent when I came to the Academy. I wanted to be a Thunderbird pilot and obviously the helicopter was not in that line. I said I want to go fly fighters. I want to fly F-4s. The Air Force immediately said okay. So, I quickly signed out of Whiteman AFB and we went down to Randolph AFB for transition to fixed wing flying the T-38. We were in a pipeline that was about six months long. Those who were in my class were the same ones who I had been in Basic Helicopter School with several years earlier. We accomplished the requirements of that six month program very quickly.

When I left Randolph AFB, I was assigned to the RTU at Davis Monthan AFB since they were the training unit for F-4s and I went right to the front seat of the F-4. I was there with many of my classmates who had started in the back as a WSO or GIB and were now upgrading to the front seat. It was very clear that I had flown low speed rotary, but I did very successfully get through that course and actually had an assignment back to Vietnam for a second tour. But, about a week before graduation, I was called by the Military Personnel Center and I was informed that I had been selected to go to test pilot school and it was mine to

turn down. Then, they added, and you are going to go on exchange to the Navy school at Patuxent Naval Air Station. They also added as a helicopter pilot. Up to that last point, I was very excited. I said, "I need a couple of days to think about this." I went and met with the DO of the flying unit. I told him the dilemma that I had. He said, well, why don't you fly to Pax River (which is in Maryland) from Tucson (where Davis Monthan was) and talk to them and see if you can work out something. I knew talking to the Military Personnel Center wasn't going to help so, I checked out an F-4, did a cross country to Pax River in Lexington Park Maryland and walked into the skipper's office. I remember the conversation fairly clearly. I said, "Do you see the F-4 out there?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I flew it." He said, "I know." I said, "I've been selected to come here." He said, "I know, as a helicopter pilot." I said, "Can we talk about this?" I explained to him that I was no longer a helicopter pilot. I was now an F-4 pilot, and I was on my way back to Vietnam, and asked if I could I go through the fixed wing school in addition to the helicopter school? He thought it was funny and he started laughing. He said, "No one has done it before." I said, "Can I?" He said, "Well, if you are stupid enough to do it, then sure." That was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. There were not enough hours in the day.

The Navy School was somewhat different from the Air Force School in that any airplane was available for you to fly. I think at the Edwards you were limited to two aircraft. The Navy School, however, maybe had 15 to 18 airplanes. You never knew what you were going to fly when you came in to work that day. In my case, it could be an A-4 or it could be a Bell H-13. You just never ever knew what you were going to fly. I finished the course and I had an assignment to Edwards AFB. They had put me in the STOL group out there and I was going to fly U-2s. We went on a post-graduation field trip, and when I came back, my assignment was changed to Wright-Patterson AFB. I would be in cargo operations flying helicopters and C-131s, which

is similar to the old T-29 navigator trainer. In this case, it had been converted to be an aircraft that carried a lot of electronics inside for evaluation. I was very disappointed, to say the least.

When I got to Wright-Patterson AFB, I was flying C-131s and in many cases what I was doing was just transporting people from Wright-Patterson AFB down to Dobbins AFB where they were working on the C-5. It was just a transport. I was also flying racetrack patterns over Indianapolis late at night as the wizards in the back did their electronic things. Some of the helicopter flying was fun, but I went over to fighter operations and I said, "If I am able to transfer to you, can I come?" Lt Col Lowell looked at my documents and what I had done at this point, and he said, "Certainly, if you are able to come over." I went back to my Commander for cargo operations and I proposed me moving to fighter operations. I don't think he was in the mood for that. I actually went in with a letter of resignation. I think that possibly my approach wasn't appropriate. It may have appeared to have been an ultimatum, but I didn't intend it that way. He threw me out of the office. At about 11:30 or 12:00 o'clock that night, he called me back and he said, he reconsidered. If I could maintain my helicopter proficiency, I could go to fighter operations. By 7:00 am the next morning I had moved everything from cargo to fighters. From that point on, I was in fighter operations but also flying helicopters. In fighter operations, we had F-4s, pace chase T-37s, and some other dogs and cats aircraft. In cargo operations, we had an H-3 helicopter and a Huey. I became the chief flight examiner for the F-4, the T-37 and the Huey and the Standardization/Evaluation (Stan/Eval) for the H-3. That meant when the Inspector General (IG) came or Stan/Eval came, I was a target of opportunity.

I had fantastic commanders, Bud Lowell was my commander in fighter ops, and Colonel Jim Abramson was the Wing Commander. Abe and I became good friends and remained good friends for a long, long

time. When we were flying, I would swear that Abe was always trying to kill me. He assigned me to the National Severe Storms Laboratory at one point flying out of Oklahoma City and Tinker AFB. My purpose was to, in a fully instrumented airplane, fly into the worst thunderstorms you could imagine and be the guinea pig to evaluate and certify the ground-based Doppler radar that was also looking at these particular clouds to determine if this type of Doppler could discern turbulence levels and reflectivity, meaning the amount of moisture or hail. I was the validator of the data. I flew approximately 60 or 65 penetrations into some of the worst storms I had ever seen in my life. That was one of the things. Another one was we had a cone attached to the front of an F-4 and we were looking at Reynolds numbers. I had to fly Mach one at essentially sea level as we evaluated this cone. What we were trying to do was determine whether wind tunnel data accurately reflected reality. In our look at Reynolds numbers, we had this long cone and there was a sensing hypodermic needle sort of thing that would transit the cone and gather data within the boundary layer. Now, we're supposed to do it at Mach one, and we were supposed to do it as low as we thought possible. Well, being a helicopter pilot, the nape of the earth is low. So, we did. We would take off, myself and a guy named Larry Roberts the flight engineer, from Wright-Patterson and we would fly to the bottom of Lake Huron and I would fly at about 50 feet at Mach one. What we discovered was that the horizon is not really that far out. As we were making one of these very high speed passes, a tanker or freighter appeared over the horizon. We went by it at supersonic speed, and I know to this day the captain of that ship is still wondering what the heck just went by because I know he had to have had a pressure wave of some sort. But I never heard any reports so I don't think he ever wanted to report what he saw.

I did a lot of things like that during my time at Wright Patterson. One day, Colonel Abramson called me and he said NASA is looking for a test pilot current

in both rotary and fighters. They had none. NASA asked us if the Air Force had any, and you were the only person on the list. He said, "Would you like to go?" Which I realized wasn't a question. "Would you like to be detailed to NASA as a test pilot? I have a T-39 outside and we're going to fly you to Langley AFB to visit the NASA Langley Research Center," which was across the runway from Tactical Air Command (TAC) at that time, Air Combat Command (ACC) now. We flew there and I met Jim Patton, who was the Director of Aircraft Operations. He said, "Let me take you into the hangar." I went into the hangar and there were 20 aircraft in there. I was staring at them and I said, "Which one do I get to fly?" He said, "All of them." It included a B-57, a Canberra, 737, T-38, it was just a pilot's dream!

Lindsay: Sounds like a toy store.

Gregory: It was a toy store. I flew back to Wright Patterson and said, "Colonel, I'll do that." He said it was just for 2 years. Colonel Abramson had just been promoted to Brigadier General and he was going to Air Force Systems Command Headquarters at Andrews AFB as the IG. So, I headed on down to Langley. I was just having an absolute ball, but I'm still thinking two years. This happened in 1974 when I went down to Langley. The war had wound down, but I was hoping to get into a normal fighter squadron, which I had not had an opportunity to do. Jim Patton apparently asked that I remain one more year, so that took me to three years. I was flying everything they had, but I was the principal demonstration pilot for many activities on the 737. They sent me down to Piedmont Airlines to get a type rating on that aircraft. I didn't get the type rating, but I did go through the ground school in the simulation and things like that. I was flying the 737 from an aft cockpit and we were looking at ergonomics, flight control systems and displays. This airplane basically was the forerunner of future Boeing aircraft. The assignment continued to go on and then I got selected for Intermediate Service School (ISS)

and instead of sending me to Maxwell AFB, they sent me the Armed Forces Staff College which was in Norfolk and it was just a commute across the James River. While I was there, I would get an assignment to someplace after that.

About that time, the astronaut thing came up. As a test pilot I was doing everything every day, but I got into a rut again because everything I was doing was making a contribution, but I was essentially doing the same thing and didn't see any advancement. It was fun, but I was doing the same thing and it was a rut. During that time, I saw an advertisement and it said apply to the astronaut program and be an astronaut. I looked at it and I hadn't thought anything about that before, but I looked at it and said, well shoot, that's something to do. At that time, a friend of my parents called me, General Ben Davis Jr. who was the leader of the Tuskegee Airmen. I had known him since I was five since he was a friend of my parents. My mother and his wife had been in social clubs together but I had known him as just Ben Davis. I had no idea who he was. That was the tradition in the family to call all the men by their first name and last name and the women would all be Aunt and their first name. That's how I knew him. Well, he called me and by this time I knew that he was a three star general. He said I needed to apply for the astronaut program for myself personally and the Tuskegee Airmen. This must have been 1976 and I said, "Who are the Tuskegee Airmen?" I had never heard of it before this. He told me about the Tuskegee group, the experiment, and the success of it. I was believing I was the first one and now I'm finding out the torch had been given to me by the Airmen before me. Eugene Buller and Bessie Coleman had given them the torch before that. I was just one in a long string of flyers doing it because it was a lot of fun.

There was also a young lady Nichelle Nichols, who was on the show Star Trek. I hadn't known at the time, but looking back, all the previous astronauts were white, European, male and that there had been

no women or minorities in the program. So, Nichelle took it upon herself to visit NASA and say, let me help you recruit a more diverse group, and NASA agreed. In February 1977, Nichelle was contracted by NASA as part of a company called Women in Motion, which she was the leader of. She went on a recruiting campaign that was only four months because the deadline was June 1977 for the application. At that point, they had only about 1000 applicants. When she finished, there were more than 8000. There had been no women or no minorities who had applied before she started. When she completed she had a phenomenal number of minorities and women interested who had applied for the program. I remember seeing her on TV during her campaign. She was in a blue flight suit pointing at me saying, "I want you to apply for the astronaut program." It was clear that she was talking directly to me. Between Gen Ben Davis and Nichelle, I applied. It was a huge application. I thought to myself, I had never been to Edwards AFB and since I didn't go to school there and since I was at Wright Patterson instead Edwards, nobody at Edwards would know who I was. I thought I can apply as a military officer but, if I were on the selection committee, I wouldn't choose me because I didn't know me. I decided I would apply also as a civilian with a resignation letter. So, I sent in the two applications. As I anticipated, the Air Force selection board did not pick me, but in August of 1977, I got a call. I was at NASA Langley. I got a call from General Tom Stafford who was the Division Commander at Edwards. He said, "Who the hell are you?" I was standing at attention. I said, "I am such and such," and explained who I was. He said, "Well, what are you doing?" I said, "I was a test pilot at Wright Patterson under General Abramson, and I was requested to be detailed to Langley, so I'm a test pilot at NASA Langley." He said John Young, who was the astronaut office commander, had called him because he and Tom Stafford were astronauts together. He said, "Who is this military guy applying as a civilian to the astronaut program?" Tom Stafford said he had no idea, so that's why he called me. I told him and he said,

“That’s all I need,” and he hung up. This was in August, and I headed to Armed Forces Staff College.

In November, I was called. I was still in school and they said, could you come to an interview for the astronaut program? I hadn’t heard anything since August. I said, let me check with the chain of command and I was given permission to go down for the interview. I went down and interviewed and I believe I was in the last group to interview. The interview was one week and then I was back to Staff College. We were graduating in mid-January. I came into school one morning and we had little cubby holes with messages and there was a little message in there that said call Mr. Abbey. He was the flight crew operations director above John Young.

I think NASA was looking for somebody who was not risk averse and looking forward to a space adventure. I don't think any of us were the top in any category, but I think that we were like chunks of coal and with the right pressure and time, we would become diamonds.

I called him, expecting something like, Fred, thank you so much, but you weren’t selected. Instead, he said, “Major Gregory, are you still interested in this job down here? You have been selected as an astronaut.” My thought was, as a civilian or as a military guy? But, I didn’t ask the question. Then later that day, there was a press release from the Air Force listing me as an Air Force test pilot selected for the astronaut program. So, that’s how I found out that I was apparently accepted, or at least got through the front door by the civilian application, but the Air Force decided to maintain me on their ranks. There were 35 of us who went down to that program. 20 were brilliant scientists and engineers and 15 were stupid pilots like me. That’s how I got into the program.

We all met in Houston in the end of January 1978. That’s when we were introduced to the world. All of us were kind of looking at each other, wondering, I have no idea how I made it here. How did you make it here? That was interesting because I think everybody there said they had no idea how they got there because we could all think of 10 or 15 people much more qualified. I think though as we began to talk, we realized that we were certainly technically qualified. I think what they were looking for, as we talked though, were people who were broader. Who had other interests. I was also a major water skier at the time and was a racquetball player and handball player. There were technical climbers there. In our conversations, we didn’t talk about solar physics or anything like that. We talked about the fun that we had doing other things and what I also found was there wasn’t an ego in the group. Type A’s, yes. But the ego wasn’t here. Some of these folks hadn’t flown much and this was their first airplane flight when they came down for the interview, but they thought it was exciting. I think NASA was looking for somebody who was not risk averse and looking forward to a space adventure. I don’t think any of us were the top in any category, but I think that we were like chunks of coal and with the right pressure and time, we would become diamonds. We had a great time. It was just a lot of fun. That’s how I got into the astronaut program.

Lindsay: Why did you leave the astronaut program?

Gregory: The third time I flew, I realized, and that would have been my second command, that my next assignment would be to command another mission and I was I was getting a little bored doing it. So, I remember telling my family because we were all in this together that I made a decision that I was going to leave the astronaut program. I broke it to the family at our dinner table expecting great pushback. My wife, I remember, looked up and said, “Well, that’s nice, could

you take the trash out?" I had been wound so tightly in this role that I didn't know that there were trees or butterflies or birds. I didn't know we had a swimming pool. The whole world changed. I thought I needed some event to occur before retirement. I looked at my flying time and it was very close to 7000 hours. I said okay I'll fly until I get to 7000 hours. On the 30th of May, 1992, I was in a T-38 with Kathy Sullivan, who was also an astronaut, and we flew up to Whiteman AFB from Houston for lunch. Whiteman was my first assignment after Vietnam. We then flew back to Ellington and did touch and go's and at 7000 hours, I did a full stop, taxied in, left everything in the aircraft including my, helmet, gloves, beanie, checklist, clipboard, and bag. I left everything in the airplane and walked away. I never flew another airplane in my life from that point on. Never. Years later they sent my helmet to me. I don't know where it is to this day. It was a part of my life and I just ended it.

If you look at my career it was starts and stops. Hard stops with a new career beginning. I never looked back and never regretted leaving the astronaut program. People have asked me if I were to redo my career, would I do anything different? I sit and I think, if I hadn't gone to the Academy, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. If I hadn't gone to helicopters, I would never have been able to go through both courses at Pax River. If I hadn't been a fighter/helicopter guy would never have been able to be loaned to NASA. If I hadn't done the independent application, I would never have gotten into the into the astronaut program. I look back and I say honestly nothing I did I would undo or do it a different way, because my career would have gone someplace else. But, I tell you, in my career I had fun and I made a contribution. That I can say for sure.

After the astronaut program, I thought I was finished and I was looking for what I was going to do next. NASA headquarters or someone up there called and I went to NASA Headquarters in DC and the new administrator, Dan Golden, came out

and George Abbey was there with him. Dan Golden looked me in the eye and he said, "I'm going to offer you a job you will not turn down," which was very clear. So, I took over the safety and mission assurance associate administrator for the Agency. I had never been a safety officer before. So, I called out to the Naval Post Graduate School and talked my way into a Commander Safety Program out there. I visited many different safety organizations and aviation organizations to learn what it was that I was supposed to do, because I really didn't know what I was supposed to do. From the traditional point of view, the role of the safety guy was one who stood at the door and stopped things. I didn't think like a safety person. I thought the safety person would have been part of a toolbox that a program, a project commander, a project leader or program leader would use in addition to other tools. It was believed in those days that mechanical things were the primary reason for failure and that they assumed that the reliability factor of the human and of software was one, so they disregarded those elements. Well, I didn't think that way at all. So, I kind of upended the safety program within NASA and included the human and computers as fallible parts of a complex system essential for the success and safety of any program. The satellites, ground support equipment, everything. For those eight years or so, we had no major accidents or incidents and we shook up the world a little bit. The engineers, the traditional legacy engineers, didn't understand this new approach and in some ways kind of discarded it. But we persevered and did good. Following my stint running safety for NASA I was then selected to lead the human spaceflight program. It was supposed to be a temporary thing, but that ended up being permanent. This was at the beginning of the International Space Station operations. Our partners were the space agencies in Japan, Canada, the European Space Agency, and Russia.

Then, one day, my secretary came to me and said the President would like to talk to you. I was thinking the President of what?, because I hung out with the

President of Boeing, Lockheed and others. My secretary said, "Get on the phone, it's THE President." So, I got on the phone and the President says "I'm considering you to be the Deputy Administrator of NASA. Would you consider it?" That that was another thing I realized was not really a question. The problem was to do that, I would be President nominated and Senate confirmed and it meant then that I would have to get rid of all of these things that had anything to do with money raising. At that time, I was a Board member of the Associate of Graduates (AOG) and I would have to give it up. I continued as the principal U.S. negotiator for the International Space Station and assumed all others jobs assigned as the agency COO. Sean O'Keefe was the administrator at that time. When he left to become chancellor of LSU, I became acting administrator of NASA. I was the acting administrator for three months until the new Administrator, Michael Griffin came in. At that point, I was just kind of, you know, tired of all of this. So, I attempted to resign and I was told that since the President hired me, the President was the one who would need to agree. I followed the process and I would send in my Letter of Resignation and they would send it back saying, "That's good, but you need to change this part." I'd send it back, and it would come back again. I had to go through the office that was responsible for hiring and firing those who are appointed by the President. Since I kept going through there and that is where it kept getting stopped, I wrote directly to the President at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. That's not exactly the way it went, but it came in another way instead of through that office. It was agreed that I would be able to resign when the new Deputy had been appointed. I was already an SES (Senior Executive Service), and when you are Presidential nominated and Senate confirmed, you can still maintain the SES. As such, you could only leave after a pay period. So, I ended up resigning the first week in December 2005.

Something funny that happened earlier, when I left the astronaut program, and since the Air Force

was detailed to NASA, when I left the Air Force, I immediately became an SES running the safety program. I had put in my application for retirement and then we realized we had to delay it a month, so they sent a supplemental form in to delay retirement. I began going to my retirement briefings and a Master Sergeant came up to me and he says, "Colonel, you actually retired three days ago." I said, "What do you mean? I'm not supposed to retire until the end of January." He said, "No Sir, you're retired. You really can't be in these classes now because you have already retired." So, I never got out briefed. I never did the Veteran's Administration thing. I didn't do all of those things that I was supposed to do in that last month, and so I was just retired.

Lindsay: That was another hard stop, like you had mentioned earlier.

Gregory: Exactly. That would have been December 1992 and I thought I was retiring in 1993. So that's the history. It was fun. It really was fun. I did many other things at the same time. I will tell you, my honest wish was to be a history professor. History is my love. At Wright Patterson I began a military history program at the University of Dayton toward a Master's Degree. I completed about 3 courses and at one point, I called the Academy. I said I am such and such and I am working on my masters in military history and I am a test pilot now and just assigned, but I'd love to come up as a professor of history. I had already done the numbers and I would have been able to finish the Masters and PhD in 18 months, if they would just send me to the University of Colorado. The Captain I talked to sounded excited about this. About 3 minutes later the phone rings and it was the Chair of the Department. He says, "Captain Gregory, the Air Force just finished spending \$175,000 to teach you to be a test pilot, there is no way in hell, they are going to let you go." So, that didn't happen.

It's been a fantastic career and I have enjoyed it. Changing topics a bit, I think what our Air Force Chief of Staff General Brown did when he when he changed the mantra of the Air Force to "airpower anytime, anywhere", I love it. I just think this is the most exciting thing that I have heard in the last few months. I'm excited about what I see the Air Force moving toward. It's back to the fun again.

Lindsay: It is and it's not so much of a pivot, but it's more of a clarification in the focus. He's really focused on the core competency of what we do as an Air Force.

Gregory: I think there's a different understanding of what the Air Force stands for now. So, I do see it as a pivot. We are not Stanford or Harvard or Morehouse. We are war fighters and that is what we do. Anything that we do, makes it so. You could be an economist, but you're an economist warfighter. You are a warrior in all of the things that you are doing now. Putting in all of the innuendos and qualifiers, I thought, was really taking us down a road of confused focus. I don't know if I had mentioned this to you before, but my philosophy is keep it simple stupid. As a young potential cadet, a basic, when you get off the bus and look up at the ramp, "Bring Me Warriors" is what I would put up there. I don't want it to be complicated. I want them to understand immediately what it is that they are signing into. I think that the Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do is critically important, but it is much more complex. It's too theoretical. I think this has to be in the cadet's mind as soon as they get there, exactly what it is that they are training to be. I want to go right to it. As part of it, there are certain things that we consider important, essential to being an excellent leader. One of them is integrity. We demonstrate the integrity initially with the Honor Code that we have. We will not lie, cheat, or steal nor tolerate among us

those who do. Your character, your leadership, and your integrity are going to be paramount. Anything you do, you've got to be passionate about it. You have to be able to explain and describe why it is important that you do all of these things. People put all these lists out about what a good leader does and I say it's very simple. The leader understands the goal, the importance of it, the rationale of it, and somehow that is transmitted to those who follow. That person also has to demonstrate that you can trust me. As I look back in my career, the people who I followed were those who excited me about everything I did. You could sense the passion and you could trust them. My sense is that is exactly what General Brown is talking about. I would say Bring Me Warriors at the beginning of the ramp and I would have the Honor Code stamped at every entrance off the Terrazzo in every stairwell so there is no doubt in any cadet's mind exactly what is expected. The core values

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are discussion things. Maybe as you walk into Mitchell Hall, you have those core values posted there so that at the table you could have a discussion where you could talk about these core values. I can be a warrior and an economics guy, but I'm the best economics warrior you have ever seen in your life.

Lindsay: Thank you for walking us through that journey and those perspectives. As we think about

preparing leaders for the future, it's not so much that list of attributes and checking them off a list, it is much more core to our identity of who we are as a person with that idea of integrity. It is how I'm showing up, that integrity, what I am excited about, that passion, those very core fundamental things are what we need to make sure we keep in mind so that when leaders go out and face new and novel situations they are grounded. They know where they are at, they are trustworthy, they have integrity, and they may be in a situation they've never seen before, but they know how they're going to be because I know who they are.

Gregory: Yes. So, we can talk about core values, but basically we are looking for somebody who has integrity. What I have found is that if you go into a group and say this is what we're going to do, they can sense that not only this is what we're going to do, but he or she believes in it. Then, the next thing you say is, "Answer the question, why?" A lot of people don't know why they're doing something. They've just been told to do it. What I discovered in the space program was that we had a bunch of requirements, but you could indiscriminately change the requirements. So, it was never really requirement, it was more like guidelines. After Challenger, we realized that our whole system had been compromised by different groups of people believing that they were doing the right thing. But in many cases nobody else knew about it. So, for every rule, we created rationale for the rule. If you were going to change the rule, you are really challenging the rationale. Therefore, you couldn't change a rule without changing the rationale. We established a review process that, was not burdensome at all, but the review says you want to change the rule, but the rule follows the rationale. Are you wanting to change the rationale? You start with the rationale, and then you go to the rule. Things became much more stable and people then began to understand why. This is important.

For the military process that we have, it would be good to discuss why it is that we do the things we do at the Academy. Why it is important. Why do we have an Honor Code? Not just that we have an Honor Code, but why we have an Honor Code. Why do we do this? Why do we do that? And I think that would give the cadets a better understanding of why they are there. They may think they know why they are there, but they may not really know why they are there. One of the things that we had, and I'm not saying go back to legacy, but during the summer we all went into F-1 and we watched these movies. They were called growth and development of the Air Force. They talked about the history of the Air Force and these were all classic movies and documentary movies. But when you left, you began to see exactly what it is that the Air Force does and how I am now a part of that. I asked my grandson Scott '11, and my granddaughter Caitlin '12 when they were there, did you have Air Force history discussions during the summer? They said that they didn't or couldn't remember having them. My granddaughter was a trainer in one of her assignments, and I brought in 12 of my classmates and they talked to the Doolies about the Air Force that they knew. It was interesting because it was just for Doolies, but then third-classmen, second-classmen, and first-classmen began showing up just standing around the room. Caitlin told me that at the last presentation that she had when she was the Training Officer, there were 61 people in the Day Room listening to the stories. They loved it. It was really the only exposure the Doolies had to the legacy of the Air Force.

Lindsay: That is really important because if I understand the why and the importance of the legacy, I can now understand my role and how I fit in. If I don't understand that legacy, I may feel like I'm going to be an engineer or I'm going to be a pilot. But to your point, I'm not. I'm a warrior who is a pilot. I spent 22 years in the Air Force and I was a Behavioral Scientist as a function, but a warrior in purpose. So, it is that

legacy that provides that purpose. If I have the purpose, I can see where I fit into that. Otherwise, I may feel like an independent actor out here at the whim of the Air Force, but it is so much more than that when we think about how I fit in.

Gregory: It really is. You could have gotten the education at the Colorado School of Mines and it would have been a great education. I think it is really important that when the Basic Cadet steps off the bus, they are immediately told, this is why you are here. This is why you are not at some other liberal arts institution or engineering school. This is why you're here. Everything you do here will make you a warrior in the Air Force.

Lindsay: It is really about that warrior mentality. Thinking about warrior identity and the first 60 seconds off the bus we have the opportunity to lay a 60+ year thought process on an individual that can influence them down the road.

Gregory: Of course. And when the bus pulls up, the basic cadet's exit and as they stand on the footprints, they should immediately see the statues and the sign above the ramp. The statues are of our Air Force Academy heroes and the words above the ramp should say "Bring Me Warriors". Then, the basic cadet process can begin. They really need to get their mind focused on what it is I'm here for before you begin the indoctrination. As I think about what General Brown said, this might be the time for a pivot in a sense of what we think is essential to create these great leaders in the future.