

Brigadier General Olan Waldrop - A Tribute

His Humanity. Listen to descriptions of General Waldrop and you will hear the same themes expressed in many ways: kind, generous, humble, self-effacing, courteous, a true gentleman, selfless, honorable, enthusiastic, inspiring, a man of his word, always willing to help those in need, and "a man worth knowing."

One person said that he made every person feel like they were the most important person he had ever met. Another said that when Gen Waldrop spoke to his SOS class, it made him proud to be in the JAG Corps. If asked about himself, he would quickly pivot the conversation so that the questioner became the focus. It follows that, regardless of his circumstances, he was not one to complain, he just kept pushing forward.

Interestingly, these traits are usually mentioned before his formidable legal skills. That's because they were his foundation and source of his profound connection to others. It should encourage all of us that even if we do not share General Waldrop's extraordinary professional talents, we can do the kinds of things that made him most meaningful and influential.

His Active Duty Military Career. General Waldrop received his commission through the Air Force ROTC program in 1966, and entered active duty in 1968 after completing undergrad and law school at the University of Alabama. During a career of over 30 years, he served as the commander of the Air Force Legal Services Agency (predecessor to AFLOA), Executive to TJAG (where he pioneered the full-time participation in the Air Force Board Structure by a judge advocate), a military judge, and the SJA of AFMC, PACAF, Nellis AFB, and McConnell AFB. As the legal adviser to the special assistant for ICBM modernization he demonstrated the JAG Corps capability to make significant contributions in complex and technical operational matters. He retired in 1999.

His Continuing Service After Retirement. He moved to Alabama and never stopped serving the JAG Corps, the Air Force, and the community. He was a constant participant in the AFJAGS Foundation as a board trustee, secretary, and president. He regularly attended JASOC graduations and other events and would make himself available whenever he could help.

His support for AFMC continued as a charter member and later chairman of the AFMC Civic Leader Program (CLP) which connects community leaders at AFMC locations with AFMC leaders. His "vision, persistence, and respect" are credited with helping make the CLP a model followed by other commands. He became an integral part of the Montgomery support system to the local military community, including participating in an association of Montgomery area industry partners and the Maxwell AFB and Gunter Annex communities.

The Waldrop Award. He received unique recognition for his contributions when in 2005 TJAG announced a new JAG Corps Annual Award, the Olan G. Waldrop, Jr. Unsung Hero Award, which honors "selfless dedication to duty, tremendous support to others, and dedication to the JAG Corps." Of course, the announcement was kept secret from Gen Waldrop because he would never have sought that kind of honor.

His Lifelong Wish. General Waldrop once said: "I can never remember not wanting to be in the Air Force." He started serving on the first day he was able until he couldn't anymore. But his service will continue through his legacy.

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