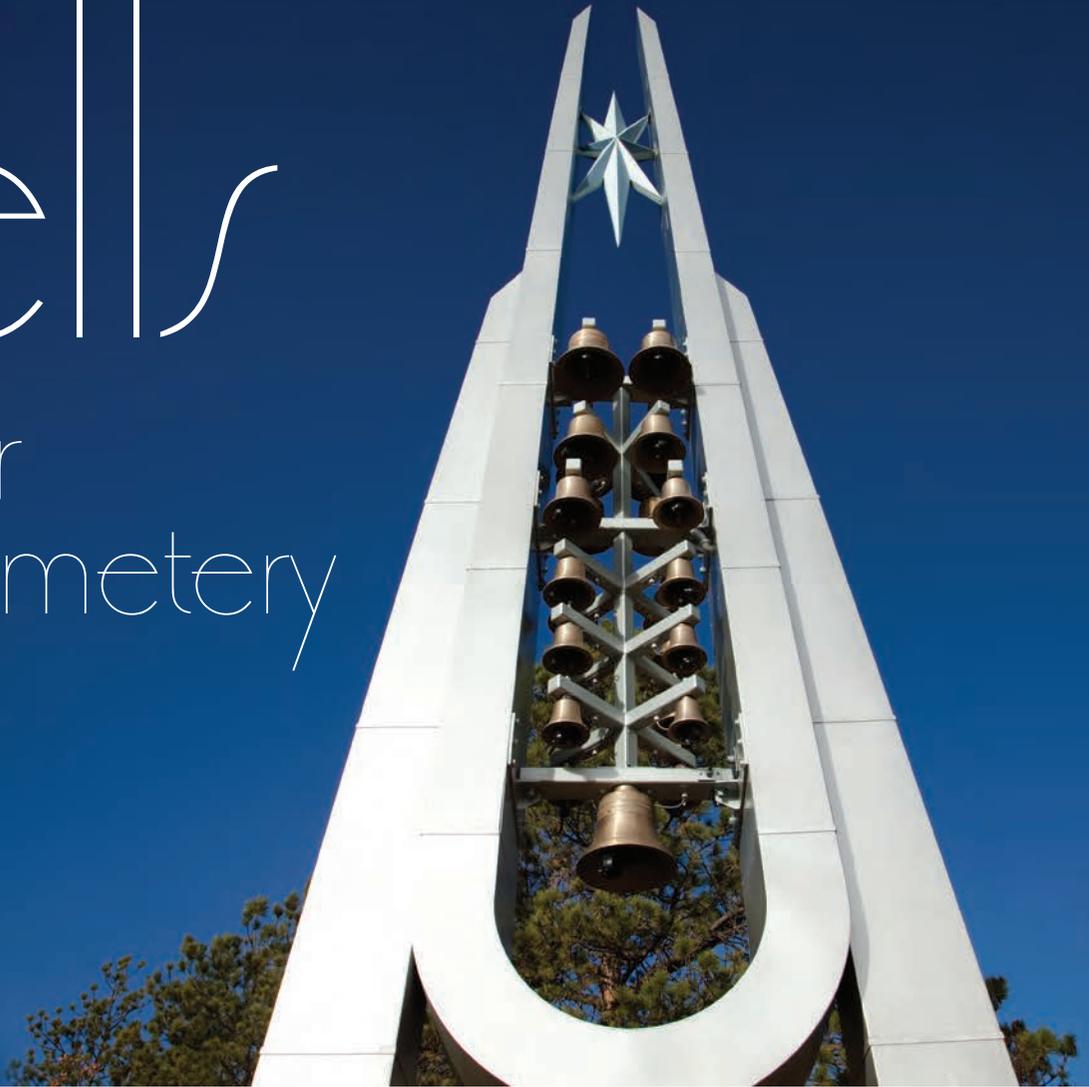


Bells at Our Cemetery



THE CLASS OF 1967'S GIFT BRINGS MUSIC AND BEAUTY
TO THE ACADEMY'S MOST HALLOWED GROUND

Written by Bob Muldrow '67

The American Legion Memorial has overlooked the USAFA Cemetery for the past ten years. However, its journey to that peaceful knoll on the west side of the cemetery grounds has been decades in the making. The memorial initially resided high on the hillside to the west of the Chapel. The distinctive structure, which is crowned by a Polaris, has been known by a multitude of names—some more irreverent than others. It has been called the Tower of Peace, the Tuning Fork and the Roach Clip. Now, through the efforts of the Class of 1967, this beautifully renovated memorial, which has been adorned with 25 cast bronze bells, will peacefully serenade those at the Academy Cemetery serving as a reminder of sacrifice, service and peace.

The history of this project and memorial began with the dedication of the Schulmerich “Carillon Americana” bells instrument which was held at the Academy on September 12, 1961. In 1969 the Chief of Staff of the Air Force approved the Academy’s cemetery master plan, which included installing a tower in the cemetery with wiring running back to the carillon in Arnold Hall. The plans for this tower varied over time as the American Legion tried to raise the necessary funds for its completion. After examining the expense of having a carillon in Arnold Hall and a tower in the cemetery, plans were revised to place the tower next to the Chapel. Varying designs for the tower were completed through the years, with the memorial’s size ranging from 40 feet to 100 feet in height. Architect Pierre Bezy devised a plan to add three speakers at the top of what he called the tuning fork. However, this addition, along with a lighting system and an accompanying memorial walk, never came to fruition.

Throughout the 1970s, the price tag for the tower hovered around \$100,000, which was more than the local Colorado Auxiliary of the American Legion could raise on its own. Several nationwide fund raising initiatives were attempted to mixed results and plans were revised again and again.

By 1980, funds had been raised to a level where the tower project was finally ready to be launched. C. Clay Davis was selected to be the architect for the final design. The cost was in the \$40,000 range with an additional \$5,600 spent on the Polaris star located high between the twin towers of the carillon frame. Wiring from Arnold Hall to the Chapel and tower was eliminated from the design and the

memorial was not connected with the carillon as originally planned.

In May 1981, then-Superintendent General Kenneth Tallman and then-C3C Albert Feliu accepted the tower in front of one hundred and fifty distinguished visitors. Most prominent was Mr. Vincent Gay, who had worked tirelessly as Chairman of the Legion Tower Committee from the early days to the present state of this lengthy saga. In 2002 the American Legion Memorial was moved to the cemetery, where it resides today next to the Cemetery kiosk where visitors can look up information on their loved ones.

The Class of 1967, with support from Superintendent Lt. Gen. Mike Gould ’76 and the Memorials Board, decided that having a carillon at our cemetery would be a welcome and reverent addition to the ceremonies and funerals conducted on the Cemetery’s sacred grounds. During our 40th Class Reunion the project was identified and the class began to work on the project with great enthusiasm and hard work. The class went on to raise over \$295,000 to bring the project to fruition.

The Verdin Company, the preeminent cast bronze bell producer in the world, was selected to provide the cast bronze bell architecture for the carillon. Verdin has been producing bells since 1842 and has over 35,000 clients worldwide including the Smithsonian Institute and Walt Disney World.

Before the bells could be added to the memorial, major structural engineering work had to be completed to accommodate the 3,800 pound weight of the bells and power had to be added to the structure. The tower can now withstand 100 mile per hour winds, which is not too much of a stretch if you remember your days on the Terrazzo. Over 500 pieces of music can be played by this carillon, including an original piece entitled “We Will Remember them” written by our classmate Bruce McDonald ’67.

On a gray October day this fall, 300 guests came to the cemetery to hear the joyous sounds of the carillon bells ringing atop the American Legion Memorial. The Class of 1967 would like to thank Vice Superintendent Colonel Tamra Rank ’83 for accepting the memorial on behalf of the Academy. Our goal has been to deliver cadets and graduates a meaningful gift during our 45th reunion, and we hope that with its dedication this fall the carillon will serve as a source of comfort and pride to the USAFA community for many years to come. ✓