

## Class of 1954

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Robert Herres was born in Denver in 1932, a son of the west, embodying that region's spirit of adventure. That spirit brought him to Annapolis, as a member of the Naval Academy Class of 1954. At the Academy, Midshipman Herres was popular among his classmates and excelled as a member of the varsity rifle team. The *Lucky Bag* noted his "seemingly effortless way of doing things is bound to give Uncle Sam a top notch officer."

Upon graduation, his spirit of adventure led him to the newly created U.S. Air Force. Following flight training, he was assigned to a squadron of fighter-interceptors, piloting an F-86. After completion of Air Command and Staff College, Herres joined the Air University staff to instruct in weapons employment, delivery systems and delivery selection, for nuclear and conventional weapons. Other important assignments followed, each drawing on his leadership skills and knowledge to prepare America's pilots for the stern test they faced in the skies over Vietnam.

Following commands in Thailand and stateside at Kincheloe Air Force Base, Herres was assigned to the Strategic Air Command and Headquarters, culminating with command of SAC's Eighth Air Force Base at Barksdale. In 1982, it was on to Washington, where Herres was assigned to the Joint Staff. He served as Director in 1984 and became the first Commander of the U.S. Space Command in 1985. Two years later, Herres became the Nation's second highest ranking military officer as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the first officer to hold that newly created position. General Herres says it remains his proudest accomplishment, noting the great challenges involved in creating that position, as well as implementing other features of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The Chairman at the time, General Colin Powell, agrees, saying "Bob did a great job in defining that position and giving it the credibility that it enjoys today."

Herres had accumulated widespread respect of his peers and numerous decorations when he ended his active duty career, but his contributions were only beginning. He served as Chairman and CEO of USAA, advised presidents on space and other military matters, and worked tirelessly on behalf of the Naval Academy. In 2003, he spearheaded a drive to build a memorial arch at the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, to honor over 2,000 midshipmen who served in the U.S. Air Force, including 115 who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Much of Herres' life today centers around his large family – his wife Shirley Jean, three children and ten grandchildren.

General Robert Herres is a man whose character, leadership and legacy of service has awakened that spirit in his classmates, his fellow officers, and generations of pilots following his example.