

The Millard School and Millard Foundation

by Bill Marvel

Offering a helping hand to Air Force Academy applicants.
The rest is up to you...

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To Air Force Academy cadet candidates -

This booklet is addressed specifically to those Falcon Scholars whose tuitions are funded by the Millard Foundation. Its purpose is to inform you of the rich history of the Millard name and its contribution to the Air Force Academy.

For decades, thousands of young men and women passed through the now-closed Millard School in preparation for service academy entrance examinations. Many later rose to the highest ranks of the military profession and some died in the service of their country. Today, the Millard Foundation continues to provide scholarships to future military leaders in attaining their career goals as did the Millard School; it gives deserving cadet candidates an opportunity - nothing more - to meet the challenges ahead. The rest is up to you...

What remains little known, however, is the important history of both the Millard School and the Millard Foundation. It is incumbent upon everyone whose future is built upon either to learn the incredible dedication and effort put forth by Homer and Esther Millard. As the recipient of a Falcon Scholarship funded by the Millard Foundation, you now inherit that obligation.

This is the Millard story.

The Millard School and Millard Foundation

During its proud 50-year history, the Air Force has acquired many friends. Some of them are very well known and prestigious—the names of numerous individuals and companies come immediately to mind to anyone who ponders the USAF's evolution. The vast majority of these friends, however, are little known to most in the Air Force family and consist primarily of the millions of citizens who served in a blue suit, meeting challenges and carrying out the country's objectives whenever and wherever they occurred.

One of the Air Force's most devoted of these little-known friends, however, never wore the USAF uniform. This friend never designed, built or operated any of the aircraft, missiles or other weaponry that characterize the high-tech service we know today. This friend is a dedicated individual, now a "senior octogenarian," who for over two decades personally provided the academic and disciplinary background needed by young men and women preparing for entry into the U.S. service academies. Her name is Esther L. Millard and her story is one of a focused single-mindedness of purpose that has had a significant impact on the makeup of the officer corps of the U.S. armed forces in general and of the USAF in particular.

How significant? In June 1998, for example, two of the ten USAF 4-star generals were Millard School graduates. They are General Michael E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force and General Howell M. Estes III, Commander Air Force Space Command. Both earned appointments to, and graduated from, the Air Force Academy Class of 1965 following their rigorous Millard training. Other Millard School graduates served as Navy admirals and Air Force generals, Navy Carrier Air Group Commanders, nuclear-alert Air Force fighter- bomber wing commanders and at least one who earned the prestigious call sign "Thunderbird One." Chuck Yeager's son is also a Millard graduate. In both the active and retired ranks, as well as in civilian life, are many who passed through this little-known institution, and who owe their successes in large part to the foundation it provided.



Esther L. Millard visiting with two of her "boys" in October 1998 in Colorado Springs. On the left is USAF General Michael E. Ryan, USAF Chief of Staff. On the right is USAF General (retired) Howell M. Estes III, former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Space Command. Both 4-star generals graduated from the Millard School and later the U.S. Air Force Academy.

This raises an obvious question — how is it possible that a small and almost-unknown school of about 70 resident students per class, located in a remote portion of western Oregon, and featuring at best a rather austere lifestyle, managed to produce these and so many other fine leaders? To a very great extent, it is through the dedicated efforts of Mrs. Millard and her late husband, Homer. It is almost unbelievable that the two of them, individually and collectively, and without fanfare, provided the needed stepping stone for service academy candidates for over 50 years. Theirs is a story that until now has never been told.

Washington, D.C.

The beginnings of the Millard School occurred in 1925 in Washington, D.C. It was started by Homer B. Millard, himself a former West Point cadet. While attending the Academy, Homer realized the importance of its place in history and the utter necessity of adequate preparation — academic, physical and spiritual — that were needed for cadets to succeed. It was this motivation that led him to start the first Millard School, dedicated solely to preparing young men for the challenges of West Point. (At the time, the Naval Academy had its own prep school and, of course, the Air Force Academy did not yet exist).

Located at 1918 N. Street in downtown Washington, D.C., the Millard School emphasized rigorous preparation for the basic math, English and history exams that were prerequisites for selection to each class. Discipline, both the essential self-imposed variety as well as the less popular "externally-applied" version, was an integral part of the curriculum. It is often said that success breeds further success and this certainly held true with the Millard School. Starting right from the beginning, its admission rate to West Point was high and the success of Millard-trained West Point graduates was not lost on their World War II commanders. As a result, many well-known wartime leaders later elected to send their own sons there as a step to winning an appointment to West Point. Among these are Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton, Lucius Clay, Anthony C. McAuliffe, Willis Crittenger, Henry H. "Hap" Arnold and many others. In fact, House Speaker Newt Gingrich's father is also a Millard School graduate.

For the next 17 years Homer continued to successfully manage his school, teaching the intensive math course himself while associates drilled his students in history and the many subtle details of English grammar and vocabulary. Their high success numbers in placing graduates into West Point continued unabated. But late one Sunday afternoon, he received word of a stunning event that would eventually result in dramatic changes in his life — closure of the Millard School, meeting the woman he would later marry, and resurrection of the school in distant Oregon. That Sunday was in December, the seventh to be exact, and the year was 1941.

Homer was in Washington, D.C. when word of the Pearl Harbor attack came over the radio, hours after it had actually occurred. Far to the west, and totally unknown to him at the time, was his wife-to-be, then Esther Lound. Esther did not need to be told about the bombing, however. She was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Class of 1933, and went immediately into the education profession. On December 7, 1941 she was teaching in paradise — at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Her first recollection of the attack was "a horrible racket," excited reports on the radio and then the identification of the Japanese insignia on one of the planes flying overhead. As with her husband-to-be, a new era in her life had also begun. Most Americans alive on that date will recall that time went into fast forward immediately. Mobilization began in earnest as millions lined up to serve their country in the armed forces. The nation prepared for a long battle ahead, factories turned plow-shares into swords at a dizzying,

accelerating pace and a single overwhelming goal — victory over the enemy — overshadowed every other event of the day.

Soon after Pearl Harbor, Homer entered military service on active duty in the Army Air Corps and served in North Africa with the 9th AAF during the war. Afterwards, he remained in the reserves and eventually attained the rank of Colonel prior to retiring from the U.S. Army Reserve in 1957. Esther did the same except that she initially entered the Naval Reserves and underwent training and commissioning at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1943. As an active duty naval officer, she served until 1952 when she resigned with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

Following the war, Homer left active duty and joined civil service. He was assigned as the Executive Officer to the Secretary General of the War Crimes Trials in Nuremberg, Germany, and served in this capacity during 1946 and 1947, prior to returning to the U.S. In his absence both during and after the war, the Millard School had been run by others on his behalf.

Their efforts were appreciated, but their standards were not up to the level he demanded. When Homer returned from Germany, he was unhappy about the quality of their work and very weary of the war as well. This led to his decision to close the School in 1948.

In November that same year, Homer was sent on an unofficial inspection trip to the U.S. Armed Forces Institute in Madison, Wisconsin. The purpose of the trip was to check on the accuracy of highly complimentary reports concerning the operation. His independent view was equally laudatory. At the time of his trip, one of the active duty military personnel serving at the Institute was Esther Lound, and it was there that the two first met. Early on they realized that each had a deep interest in education and that it formed a common bond in their relationship. She had, after all, been teaching at the university level and he had owned and operated a very demanding and successful private prep school.

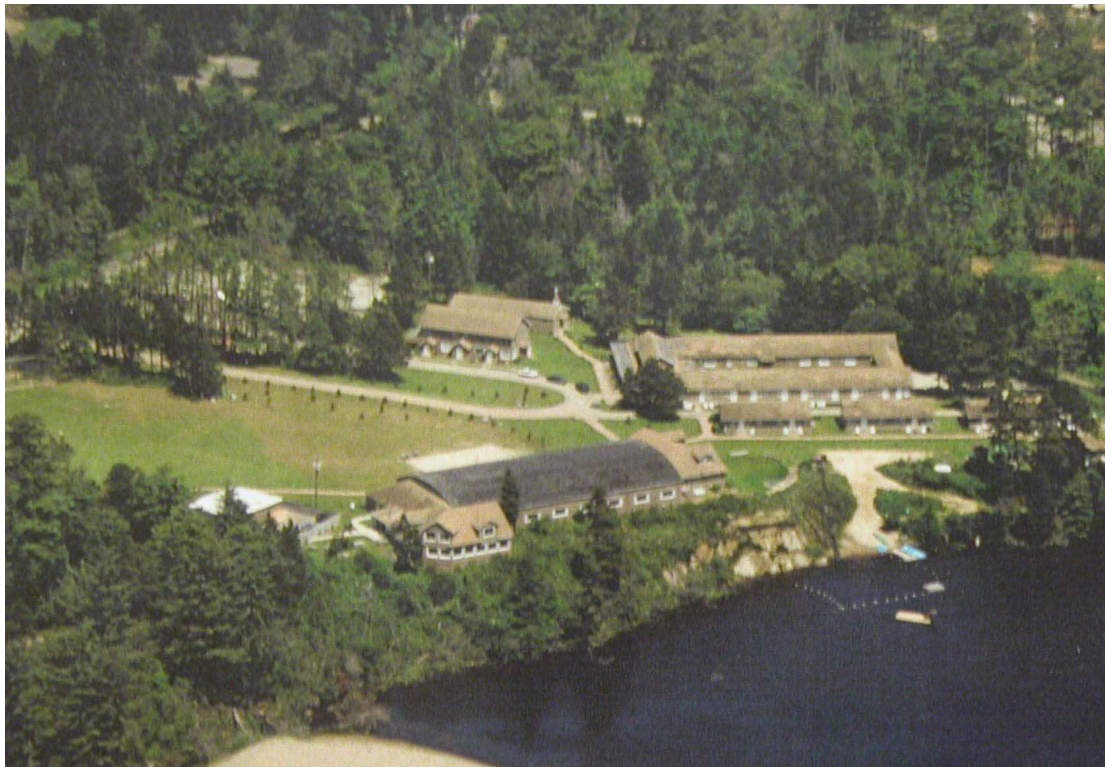
The Move to Oregon

Three years later, on April 25, 1951, he and Esther were married and bought a ranch in Langlois, Oregon, Homer's home state. Langlois is a very small town near the coastline in the southwest corner of Oregon — only a dot on the map, even today. Their desire at that point was to be independent and self sufficient, having seen many of the hardships created for everyone by the war. The Korea problem was becoming very active at the time and they wanted to be as insulated as possible from the long lines, lack of consumer goods and other inconveniences should Korea prove to be a remake of World War II. At the same time, however, Homer had come to miss the prep school business and its environment of young men striving for what he knew to be a worthwhile goal. After some earnest discussion, the two of them opted to inaugurate a new Millard School at their Langlois ranch, thus combining their mutual interest in education with his prior involvement in preparing candidates for the service academies. They opened the school in 1953 and immediately received student enrollments. Mrs. Millard taught English and Colonel Millard, math. The excellent reputation earned by the former Millard School in Washington, D.C. paid off well and gave them all the word-of-mouth advertising they needed. Sons of graduates started showing up in every class.

Historically, the Air Force became a separate service in 1947 and the Air Force Academy would open a few years later in Colorado. Many of the Millard students were sons of Army Air Corps personnel and understandably wanted to pursue the flying profession in the newly-minted USAF. Primarily as a result of this timing, the new Millard School tended to acquire students interested

mostly in the Air Force Academy just as the old one had students who were focused exclusively on West Point. Would-be Annapolis midshipmen and West Point cadets also attended the new school in significant numbers but the percentages decidedly favored the Air Force Academy. Another reason for this weighting was the fact that two financial entities had recently been formed by individuals friendly to the new USAF. Both were created to help fund prep school educations for promising Air Force Academy candidates who had not been successful in gaining appointments immediately following high school. One of these was the Falcon Foundation, established by both retired and active duty officers. The other was the Skelly Trust, established with funds provided by Mrs. Gertrude Skelly (of Skelly Oil Company fame) and administered by her son-in-law, Harold C. Stuart. Mr. Stuart had served as an assistant Secretary of the Air Force under Stuart Symington in the Truman administration.

Although Falcon Foundation scholarships were available to anyone, only sons (and later daughters) of military service personnel were eligible for a Skelly scholarship. The two entities provided scholarships for many Millard students, which tended to increase the percentage of would-be Air Force cadets above that for West Point and Annapolis. Although the Skelly Trust is still in existence, it merged with the Falcon Foundation several years ago for administrative simplification. Harold C. Stuart currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the Board of the Falcon Foundation, which is chaired by Major General William Lyon, USAF retired. The president of the Foundation is Lt. General Benjamin N. Bellis, USAF retired. The Falcon Foundation continues to grow and maintains a close relationship with Mrs. Millard to this day.



Photographed from the air in June 1998, the former Millard School site in Bandon, Oregon is now owned and operated by the Bradley Lake Christian Retreat.

As school class size grew at the Langlois ranch, so did their need for larger facilities. It was for that reason that the Millards bought the final school site in Bandon, Oregon in March 1962.

Bandon is only a few miles north of Langlois and is also a small town. The new location had been used initially as a dine and dance business, and later a retirement home was built on the property in addition to the existing structures. Accordingly, the dorm, dining facilities, gym and other aspects of the site were ideal for their needs. The setting was remote, but very close to the ocean with its pounding surf and spectacular offshore rock formations. Sand dunes and a large lake adjacent to the school provided students with ample recreational opportunities for their limited time off from studies. But although the setting and the facilities were perfect, the timing of the move was not.

Homer had been in poor health for some time, having possibly been a childhood victim of rheumatic fever. He was hospitalized for pneumonia in Bandon during both March and April, 1962, as the school purchase and move were underway. He was taken to a hospital in Portland where his condition worsened and made complicated by a developing heart condition. He weakened rapidly and died in Portland in May 1962 at 64 years of age. At the time of his death, Homer Millard had literally spent half of his life diligently preparing young men for service academy appointments and hopefully, future military careers.

Mrs. Millard continued under this unexpected and traumatic experience and had to prove both to herself and to others that she could still carry on under the difficult circumstances. However, any concerns others might have had about her ability to maintain the school's operation proved groundless. What they did not know then was that Esther Millard was every bit as focused and dedicated as was her late husband and would continue to deliver her quality Millard School product to the service academies for the next 19 years.

Continuing Success

What made the Millard School so successful for so many years? In two words, discipline and dedication, with both terms applying equally well to the students and the teachers. The curriculum consisted of only two academic courses, math and English. In 1967 physical education was added to prepare students for the Academy's demanding Physical Aptitude Exam. The two academic classes were taught two hours a day, six days a week, for either the six-month fall and winter school session or the two-month summer session. Physical Education was taught one hour a day. Emphasis was placed on a thorough understanding of the subject matter to prepare students for questions they would later face on difficult Academy entrance exams. As an example, part of the English curriculum required that they memorize in excess of 1000 new vocabulary words, many infrequently used in normal conversations, along with synonyms and antonyms for each. Much emphasis was placed on reading skills, grammar and intricate details of sentence structure. Basic math skills in algebra, trigonometry and geometry were honed to a much greater level than would normally be expected from students who had just graduated from high school only weeks or months before. Mandatory presentation to the class of one's work on the blackboard built self confidence and public speaking ability. Study was mandatory for several hours every afternoon and night. Short breaks were coupled with meal times and everyone had an hour of free time daily between 4 and 5 PM.

Spare time was a rare commodity and occurred mostly on Saturday afternoons and evenings and all day Sunday. Because of the remoteness of the site, as well as strict school regulations, students went into Bandon only on Saturday night and Sunday morning, and then only via the school's bus. Coats and ties were required on Sunday and townspeople were often curious about "what was going on" with the school, given the weekly arrival of these neatly-dressed young

men who vanished as fast as they appeared. Rumors ran rampant — one of the most common was that the "Millardies" were troubled youth in some sort of a reform school to mend their errant ways. The truth, of course, was almost the exact opposite. Homer and Esther Millard portrayed a very low profile in their personal and business lives and made no great effort to reveal the nature of the school, who the students were, or from where they came. And they came from everywhere. Besides students from all over the U.S., many were sons and daughters of active duty military personnel stationed overseas. It was not unusual to have classmates who had traveled from Panama, Japan, Guam, Spain, Germany or elsewhere to attend the Millard School. For all, Millard School life was Spartan and demanding, but also highly rewarding. The school had a long track record of success and each student had every reason to believe that achievement there would lead to attainment of a larger goal later. That goal, acceptance into one of the nation's service academies, would certainly require use of all the academic skills, study habits and self discipline acquired at Millards — and then some.

As the years rolled on, Mrs. Millard continued teaching and operating the Millard School well beyond retirement age until deciding to cease operations after the last class graduated in July 1981. She continued living in her residence there until October 1984 when she sold the property and moved to her current home a few miles northeast of Bandon. Her home is in a wooded area in a very natural setting, which suits her and her brother, Frank, just fine. Now 93, Frank is a retired forester who cleared their 5 acres of underbrush and maintains the woods in a storybook-perfect condition. He lives with his sister and still cuts their fireplace wood with both chain and hand saws. Mrs. Millard is equally as healthy and active. She reads without reading glasses and just bought a new lawn tractor to replace the one she wore out over the past 23 years! In deference to her age, she has a written checklist on the tractor that she uses to start and stop it, much like a pilot has with an aircraft. She also maintains her sense of humor. Not long ago she was talking to a friend about her "boys," as she still calls Millard graduates. Another person overheard the conversation and made the mistake of asking, "How many boys do you have?" Mrs. Millard responded, "Oh, about 3000 and almost all of them have different fathers." Although she knows that some 3000 students graduated from the Oregon Millard Schools, it is unfortunate that Mrs. Millard has no way to know how many were appointed to the service academies or how many graduated from them. Test results and academy appointments were revealed to each student well after he returned home from a Millard School session. No records of this exist except for those graduates who have made a point of keeping in touch with her over the years. She also does not know exactly how many generals or admirals are Millard graduates, but based upon those she does know, it is certainly a significant number.

An Enduring Legacy

One would think that after a lifetime of this devoted work, Mrs. Millard's involvement with the academies would have stopped with the graduation of her last class in 1981. Not so. At its inception, the Oregon Millard School was incorporated as a non-profit, tax-exempt educational institution under the tax code. Closing the school gave her several options as to how to dispose of the funds that had accrued during its many years of operation. Her fondness for the Air Force Academy led to her selection of one of these options — creation of the Millard Foundation in 1982. Through it she began to fund annual scholarships for deserving candidates for the Air Force Academy so that they could attend other prep schools similar to Millards. These scholarships were administered by the Falcon Foundation and awarded to candidates it selected

from lists of applicants supplied by the Academy. She also funded one smaller scholarship each year for a Bandon High School graduate. The first two prep school scholarships funded by the new Millard Foundation, the Claire Lee Chennault and Muir Fairchild scholarships, were already in operation but in danger of losing their sponsorships due to a national recession that existed at the time. The Millard Foundation stepped in and began to fund these two scholarships annually for the next 2 or 3 years. In 1984, the sale of the school property yielded significant financial proceeds and made possible a more permanent situation. With the allocation of \$30,000 to each scholarship fund (later increased to \$35,000), they could be established in perpetuity—that is, the interest earned from investments of these amounts would be sufficient to pay for the scholarships forever. In time, five more scholarships were created by the Millard Foundation, each of which was named after a deceased Millard School graduate. As with the first two, these were also funded in perpetuity, thus creating 7 permanent, annual prep school scholarships for Air Force Academy candidates. Each recipient of one of these scholarships receives a brochure describing the life of the individual it honors. The brochure also contains a brief statement by Mrs. Millard to the effect that the funds for the scholarship were donated by the Millard Foundation. However, several complexities entered into the ongoing operation of the Millard Foundation. Foremost was that because it was established as a private foundation, it was subject to taxes on both earnings and undistributed income. Minimizing the latter required funding additional scholarships, but the passage of time made it more difficult to learn of other deceased Millard School graduates to honor. It also created problems with trying to obtain necessary background information about them from their families. In an effort to resolve these problems, one suggestion was for Mrs. Millard to simply transfer all Millard Foundation assets to the Falcon Foundation to establish a new Millard program. Unlike the private Millard Foundation, the public Falcon Foundation was 100% tax exempt. Accordingly, it was subject to no tax penalties and thus to no erosion of monetary principal. However, the by-laws under which the Millard Foundation had been created provided only for the funding of scholarships. Money was not allowed to be used for any other purpose. For these and other reasons, Mrs. Millard dissolved the Millard Foundation in 1986 and transferred the remainder of its assets to the Falcon Foundation trust fund. These assets, entirely separate from those which provide permanent funding of the 7 prep school scholarships, were placed in a special account to support the creation of a new entity — the Millard Honors Program. Each year the Air Force Academy superintendent forwards to the Falcon Foundation a list of requests for enrichment programs that he and the senior staff believe would add significantly to cadet development but that do not qualify for the use of public funds. In turn, the Foundation does its best to provide whatever money it can in support of these programs. The Millard Honors Program, under control of, and administered by, the Falcon Foundation, is one of the funding sources that provides money needed to meet these requests based upon income generated from the Program's invested account. This income is now estimated at about \$70,000 per year, which at current levels provides a significant percentage of the entire annual commitment made by the Falcon Foundation in this area. The Falcon Foundation's funding results solely from contributions by various individuals, corporations and other entities. At the present time, Mrs. Millard is its largest benefactor, and accordingly she has the well-earned, grateful appreciation of the Foundation for their receipt of in excess of \$800,000 from her. Approximately \$210,000 of this amount funds the 7 permanent Millard Foundation scholarships and the remainder provides for the entirely separate and distinct Millard Honors Program. Carefully invested by the Falcon Foundation, these funds will continue to grow, and under the Millard Honors Program will continue to support selected requests by the Academy

superintendent. In short, this one remarkable lady has not only paved a pathway to the service academies for two decades via the Millard School following her husband's untimely death, but also now provides permanent access to the doors of the Air Force Academy for deserving candidates for all time to come through the Millard Foundation's scholarships. In addition, by helping to create, and then funding, the Millard Honors Program, she has provided for enrichment activities which benefit the entire Cadet Wing. One would be hard pressed to find another individual whose life's work has contributed a more noble or lasting accomplishment. In July, 1969, when astronaut Neil Armstrong first set foot on the moon, he made a statement that will appear in history books forever. A slight variation of it is most appropriate here. "That's a lifetime of devoted work by Homer and Esther Millard — and its result is a guarantee of endless benefits for the future leadership of the United States Air Force."

About the author –

Bill Marvel is a past recipient of a Falcon Scholarship to the Millard School in Bandon, Oregon. He graduated from Millards in 1965, from the USAF Academy in 1969 and from Purdue University in 1970. He served as a spacecraft systems engineer in the Air Force before resigning as a captain in 1976. He and his wife, Marti, live in Los Angeles where he has been self-employed as a real estate investor since he left active duty. Recognizing the important contribution that the Millard School made to his life, Bill has remained ever thankful and grateful for its existence. He has kept in touch with Esther Millard and gradually learned the little-known history of her, her husband Homer and the School itself. With her help and permission, he wrote the accompanying history of the School and the Foundation. Bill has paid all the expenses of producing this booklet, and has donated it to the Falcon Foundation for its archives and for distribution as it chooses. His motivation is to assure that the history of the Millard name will not be lost, and that future cadet candidates who receive Falcon scholarships funded by the Millard Foundation will know of the long and rich history of their benefactor.