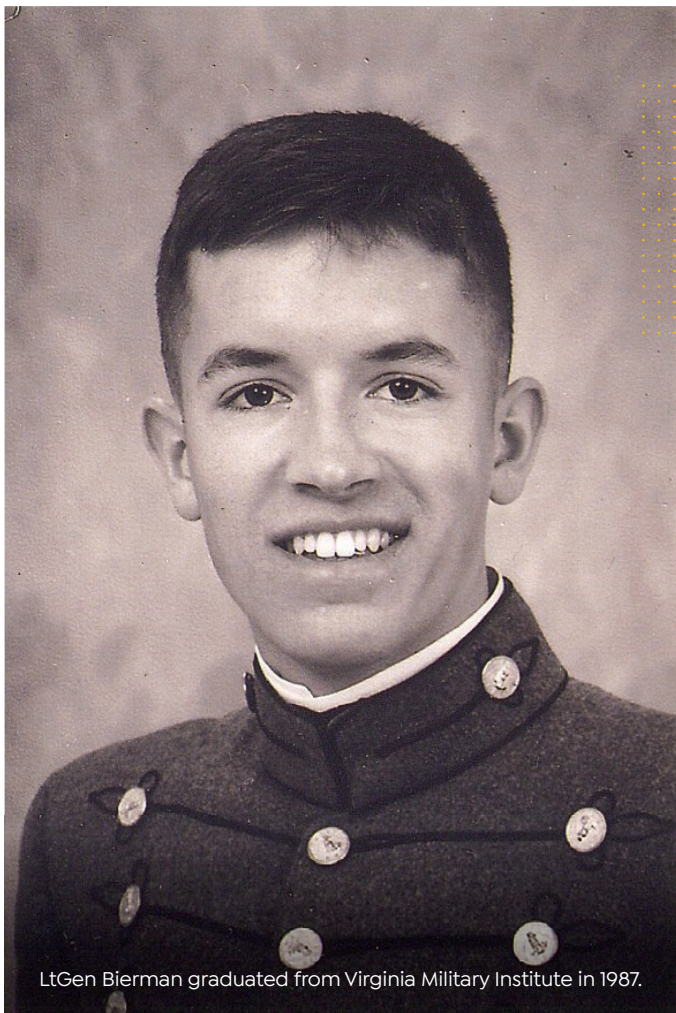


STRONG CONNECTIONS

Between Texas A&M and Virginia Military Institute

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LTGEN JAMES BIERMAN



LtGen Bierman graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1987.

Q: From your perspective, what are some similarities between the Aggie Corps and VMI?

R: The Aggie Corps and VMI are very special in their own right. Both schools have grown and nurtured unique and respected brands anchored in tradition, culture, and best practices. I have high regard for the distinctiveness of each; the Aggie Corps should stay the Aggie Corps and VMI should stay VMI.

There is also a great deal of alignment. This is especially evident in the similarities of character and motivation in the young people who choose the Aggie Corps or VMI. Both schools attract talented men and women who take on the challenges of leadership development and service. In the process of gaining a first-class education, they seek inspiration, a sense of belonging, and the pride that comes with meeting a tough standard.

Q: What are you most looking forward to in coming to A&M?

R: The people. Beth and I are amazed and humbled at the degree to which

LtGen Bierman has been married to Beth for 31 years.



the Aggie family has kindly welcomed us. We look forward to getting to know everyone better once we arrive in College Station.

Likewise, we're excited to get to know the cadets and their families. My career has kept Beth and me in continual contact with young Americans and their families. I'm clear-eyed on both the goodness and the challenges. My experience has reaffirmed the idea that well-led, respected, and motivated young people are capable of anything and will meet expectations. Setting them up for success so they can overcome challenges, learn leadership, and become better versions of themselves is very rewarding.

Q: Do you have immediate plans for the Corps?

R: I'll arrive with few preconceived notions. My sense is that there are great things happening in the Corps. At the same time, I've benefited from many useful conversations with former students who have shared their informed thoughts and opinions on the way forward. I've listened care-

fully and will continue to. I believe that first-class organizations must continually rebalance and evolve to get better.

My initial approach after joining a new unit is to put the time into learning the people, the battle rhythm, and the landscape. My focus during the first 100 days will be on gaining a better understanding of the Corps and what needs to be done, with an emphasis on listening and learning. I especially want to hear from the cadets. On top of what I take away from informal encounters with them, I'll institute a deliberate process to solicit their input shortly after my arrival.

Q: What are one or two things about your style of leadership that you would like people to know?

R: I place a premium on trust. Trust fosters growth and autonomy. It sets conditions for the kind of decentralized leadership approach inherent to strong organizations. It also creates a sense of ownership; when members of an organization know they are

trusted and respected they are more invested and willing to uphold the standard. It's important to create an environment where young leaders have real responsibility, are trusted to make decisions, feel they can try new things, and make honest mistakes in the process.

The second thing I'll mention is my belief that the best organizations are those underpinned by clearly defined standards to which all are accountable. The big picture is important, but how small things are done matters. Character is a byproduct of disciplined habit. Four years in the Corps must continue to instill the disciplined lifestyle that is essential to success.

The CCA sends a warm "Welcome to Aggieland" to the 47th Commandant of the Corps of Cadets, a VMI graduate from the Class of 1987, LtGen James Bierman.