

[This is the Checkpoints article corrected. I was sent the article to edit before publication but unfortunately ended up in the hospital for a week and missed the publication deadline. Below is how the article should have read.](#)

The Legacy Sabre

Class of 1968 Kicks Off What They Hope Will Be A New USAFA Tradition

The cadet sabre Lt. Col. (Ret.) Darrel Knutson '68 gave to his parents 50 years ago was gathering dust at home.

Knutson's son didn't want the keepsake, and his grandson wasn't interested either. So Knutson hatched an idea that eventually captured the attention of several of his USAFA classmates. He would give the sabre to a random graduating cadet in his legacy class of 2018, and suggest that the recipient pass the keepsake on to another cadet in 50 more years — a member of the Class of 2068.

"I was the old man of our class," Knutson relays. "So I wanted to give the sabre to the oldest member of the Class of 2018."

That turned out to be C1C Brian Kelly, who is the oldest member of the Class of 2018.

When he contacted the Cadet Wing about his idea, Knutson says C1C Victoria Rodriguez was enthusiastic. She asked how many other Legacy Class members were going to present their sabres to cadets?

"I'd never thought of that," Knutson admits. He sent out an email to his fellow '68 grads and asked if anyone else was interested. Fourteen classmates responded, wanting to be part of the presentation.

Among those donating their sabre was Capt. (Resd) Chuck Kavcsak, whose keepsake was stored in the attic of his home.

"I saw no future for it," he reports. It made sense to pass it on to a firstie cadet.

Other Legacy Class members who jumped on board included Capt (Resd) Bill Wood, Col. (Ret.) Ed Thomas, Col. (Ret.) P.K. Waldron, Maj. (Ret.) Rick Patterson, Col. (Ret.) Bob Williams, Col. (Ret.) Bob Stier, Col. (Ret.) Buck McCants, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Moffitt, Col. (Ret.) Ron Jackson, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Dick Coe, Capt. (Resd) Stephen Schmidt, Capt (Resd) MacWain Phillips and Col. (Ret.) Rocky Gaines.

The cadet recipients were chosen based on criteria established by the sabre donors. Some grads designated the gift for a cadet from a specific squadron. Others decided the sabre would go to a cadet who is part of an Academy singing group or a cadet who is headed to pilot training.

"It's very arbitrary," Kavcsak explains.

Knutson calls it the "Flying Fickle Finger of Fate" process for determining the recipient.

The sabres were presented to cadets on the same evening as 100th Night, Feb. 16, 2018. Several of the donors and cadets met at Doolittle Hall for a brief Flying Fickle Finger of Fate Event. Among the first-class cadets invited were Kelly, Rodriguez, C1C Ryan Silva, C1C Noelle Heiser, C1C Alexander Hill, C1C Madison Charland, C1C John Fredericks, C1C Tristan Briggs, C1C Ryan Lee, C1C Jason Plugger, C1C Christian Agmata, C1C Christopher Hartman, C1C Alia Lemm and C1C Molly Phillips.

Thanks to Knutson's access to laser etching equipment, each sabre was inscribed with the name and rank of the Class of 1968 donor and the name of the cadet recipient. It was pointed out to the cadets that they would write their own rank. The only requirement for taking possession of the sabre was that cadets would hang on to the keepsakes and perhaps pass them along in 50 years.

"Just keep it out of the thrift store window," Knutson asks.

Both Knutson and Kavcsak say they hope the sabre presentation become a tradition for each succeeding Legacy Class. Knutson already plans to email members of the Class of 1969 to suggest they carry on the idea.

"Traditions start for somewhere," Kavcsak says. "This might start a tradition, or it might not."