A Tribute to Tom Keaney

By Prof. Eliot Cohen

Tom Keaney has retired from SAIS. Hard words for me to write, but there is – after nineteen years of service to SAIS and to Strategic Studies he decided that it was the right time, and so we have sent him off with toasts, gifts, and speeches in the Strategic Studies style.

Tom and I met shortly after the first Gulf War, some 26 years ago. A mutual friend said to me “this is the guy you want” for the Gulf War Air Power Survey that I had just agreed to direct. A year in I told the Secretary of the Air Force that if I were run over by a truck (or, I privately thought, assassinated by some general overly protective of his reputation), Tom Keaney was the guy to take my place. Five years after that, when Andy Bacevich left SAIS for Boston University my first thought was, “I wonder if Tom would be willing to join Strat?” and the rest, as they say, is history.

Tom and I have been partners throughout. We built executive education programs, expanded the adjunct faculty, brought on distinguished practitioners in residence, and inaugurated the international staff rides as students today know them. We started our Basin Harbor workshops, which have exposed several hundred university level instructors to the Strategic Studies way of teaching. We expanded the size of the program by a factor of two or three, I would guess, but more importantly, we made it infinitely better. None of that would have happened without him. In nearly two decades working together we have never had a cross word, a major misunderstanding, or anything but mutual reliance, respect, and friendship. If that’s not a record, its something close.

We now have an event called “Parting Shots” which we stage a couple of weeks before graduation. The idea is to get a number of the faculty to give a couple of practical pieces of advice to those about to re-enter the work world. My most

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SAIS Europe Recap

By Kathryn Olson (MA18)

At SAIS Europe, the Strategic Studies program is comprised of 22 first-year MA students, making it one of the largest concentrations in Bologna. Europe’s changing security landscape made the Bologna campus a dynamic place for Strategic Studies students to engage with European academics and policymakers on the region’s future.

Along with organizing a film series and “Military 101” panels, this year’s Defense and Intelligence Club organized the SAIS Europe’s first crisis simulation, which situated participants in a future without NATO. Organizers Ted Dressel (MA18) and Will Yeldham (MA18) created a scenario set in 2020 marked by increasing Russian troop movements in the Baltics and U.S. interference in Belarus, with a crisis erupting after Lithuania shot down a Russian plane. The outcome of the simulation left students reflecting on the ability of small states like Belarus and Lithuania to manipulate a crisis, the role of economic cooperation and coercion, and the incendiary effect of strong diplomatic language – all relevant lessons for the present.

Strategic Studies students also spearheaded a series of “National Security Salons” aimed at fostering bipartisan discussion on national security issues in the wake of the 2016 election and giving students the communication and negotiation skills to talk to their counterparts across the aisle. The series included discussions on migration issues, the decision to use force in Syria, the U.S. role in the world, and ethics and national security.

Co-founder Abigail Gage (MA18) hopes to bring the series to Washington this fall with the hope of expanding participation across the SAIS community.
In late March, the Strategic Studies Department sent nearly fifty students, faculty members, and distinguished guests on an extensive tour of Scotland to explore the major themes and movements of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. Though most of the participants had heard little, if anything, about this campaign prior to the staff ride, it quickly became clear that this rebellion’s lessons had remarkable influence on European and even American military history.

Presentations began at the Scottish Parliament with a discussion of modern Scottish politics and nationalism, and the days to follow featured presentations at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Prestonpans Battlefield, Edinburgh and Stirling Castles, Glencoe, Fort William’s West Highland Museum, Glenfinnan, Fort Augustus and Loch Ness, Inverness Castle, Culloden Battlefield, and Fort George. Most participants continued “over the sea to Skye” for a post-staff ride excursion of hiking and distillery tours.

As for the history of the campaign, the leading figures continue to enjoy legendary and romantic status in the minds of most Scots, memorialized especially by the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Walter Scott, and Robert Burns. Charles Edward Stuart (the “Bonnie Prince Charlie” or “Young Pretender”) sought to reclaim the British crown from the Hanoverians, and his army of Highlanders, with limited French support, effectively controlled Scotland in the opening months of the rebellion. London panicked when the rebels moved as far south as Derby, England, but an intelligence failure caused the Jacobites to retreat and make their final stand at Culloden Moor in April 1746, marking the last battle ever fought on British soil. The rebels and their favored “highland charge” tactic were summarily devastated by the Duke of Cumberland’s government forces, precipitating the brutal “pacification of the Highlands.” The campaign’s aftermath impacted British, French, and American history in the remainder of the 18th century and beyond.
By Jacob Grunberger (MA18)

This year’s Spring Staff Ride covered the Philadelphia Campaign. Over the course of two days, our group of students, professors, and distinguished visitors traveled through Maryland and Pennsylvania to study the military and political decisions made by the British and the Colonies in the fall and winter of 1777.

Led by quartermasters James Mersol (MA18) and Jacob Grunberger (MA18), participants followed the timeline of the campaign, moving from General Howe’s landing at Head of Elk to the Battle of Brandywine to General Washington’s encampment at Valley Forge. Through presentations and question and answer sessions, the group examined the perspectives of political leaders, generals, and ordinary citizens to better understand the challenges that faced the Continental Army as it struggled to claim victory and establish a new, free nation.

Students embodied the roles of notable leaders such as John Hancock and General Cornwallis as well as lesser-known important figures such as Major John Clark, who led George Washington’s intelligence networks around Philadelphia.

During the staff ride, participants also gained an appreciation for siege warfare after studying the bombardment of Fort Mifflin and the importance of standardized military training after hearing from the charismatic General von Steuben. Although the weather was mostly clear, students learned how poor weather conditions can affect the outcome of a battle while studying the Continental Army’s failed counterattack at the Battle of the Clouds. In the evening, our group bonded during the campout over home-brewed “Hessianweizen,” s’mores, and a fascinating discussion about the importance of George Washington’s leadership in the context of the infamous Conway Cabal.

The staff ride concluded with a banquet at the historic General Warren Inne, where students shared their concluding thoughts and honored Dr. Keaney for his final staff ride.

Above: SSR 2017 participants at the National Memorial Arch at Valley Forge. (Photo courtesy of Steven Nowak MA17)
Alumni Give Back Through Student Coffee Hours

By: Kelly Isom (MA17) and Jake Alter (MA17)

The highly touted “SAIS/Strat Mafia” contributed considerably into both of our decisions to enroll in the Strategic Studies program at SAIS. That is why, in our capacity as the 2016-2017 Strategic Studies Alumni Coordinators, we introduced the Strat Alumni Coffee Hour Series—a set of informal networking coffee chats. Each session consisted of one alumnus and no more than 12 current students. Over two semesters, we hosted eleven alumni with experiences across the federal government, Capitol Hill, think tanks, finance, non-profits, journalism, and consulting.

These casual, off-the-record meetings provided a chance to openly discuss concerns regarding hiring trends, the current political climate, and work-life balance, to name a few. Alumni offered frank interview, application, and networking advice in addition to providing insights into maximizing the “SAIS experience.”

At the conclusion of the series, we compiled a comprehensive list of tips and pointers provided by our alumni to distribute to the current students. The advice ranged from the obvious (keep your opinions about people to yourself), to the seemingly trivial (your interviewer should not remember what you wore), to the industry specific (get a clearance at your first opportunity; learn the military ranks). Students were not only appreciative of this insider knowledge, but also of the alumni’s generosity in time and access.

To our alumni network: we’re grateful for all of your support this year. In particular, we would like to express our immense gratitude to the inaugural alumni participants: Courtney Demartini (MA12), Kinga Krisko (MA11), Mandy Smithberger (MIPP12), Mike Barrett (MA02), Yaniv Barzilai (MA13), Will Bardenwerper (MA10), Matt Williams (MA13), Phill Lohaus (MA12), Stephanie Papa (MA13), and Eric Lindsey (MA14).

If you’re interested in volunteering for next year, please contact the incoming Alumni Coordinators: Brynn Koeppen (bkoeppe1@jhu.edu) and Bryan Gilday (bgilday1@jhu.edu).
By Steve Nowak (MA17)

On April 30, Strat held its annual Dining In. Arriving to the Army Navy Club hours early, the core planners began set-up. Centerpieces, seating, and sound checks complete, the MCs began rehearsal before guests arrived. Cocktail hour began at the Daiquiri Lounge on the second floor. Professors, alumni and students mingled over cocktails in the historic setting. Katie Kaiser (MA17) and Kate Raley (MA17) diligently sold tickets, explaining the spectrum of options (literally) to thirsty guests.

At 7:15, doors opened to the main dining room and guests entered to find their seats. The elegant hostesses, Anna Sarnek (MA17) and Aisha al Mesned (MA17), welcomed their guests before the lovely Kat Morisy (MA17) sang the National Anthem. Mister Vice, Mike Cass-Antony (MA17), and Madame Vice, Jess "The Future is Female" Jones (MA17), took it from there. The night was full of laughs, tributes, and a chewy, chunky grog, guarded and coordinated by Sean McKnight (MA17).

The evening ended in the spirit to Dr. Cohen's reading of Robert Burns on the ISR Scotland trip. In tribute to all Dr. Keaney has given to the SAIS Strat program over his distinguished career, the crowd celebrated his contributions and retirement by joining in three verses of Auld Lang Syne. "We'll drink a cup of kindness yet, for Auld Lang Syne."
A Tribute to Tom Keaney (continued)

By Erin Schenck (MA07)

important one is: “find yourself a wise old bird,” by which I mean someone whose judgment and character you can trust implicitly. They may or may not have insight into a situation that you do not: but what you will find is that by some kind of inefflatable process, talking through a problem with them ends up showing you what you need to do.

Tom Keaney was my wise old bird. Whenever I have faced an important professional choice in these last two decades – go into government? Write this book or that? Take a stand on some sensitive issue? – I wandered into Tom’s office, and always came away with a sense of the right thing to do.

For generations of students Tom Keaney was their wise old bird too. By that unflappable presence, that wry sense of humor (to include the impressions from Dr. Strange-love), that unfailing presence on cold campgrounds or rain-soaked battlefields, he provided reassurance and good sense. He set standards for behavior and performance that we all live by. Most importantly, for those who knew his personal history, he set the standard for patriotism, integrity, leadership, and self-effacing service. Courage, too: he did not have to fly that unarmed little airplane at tree top levels in Vietnam, you know. Most Strategic Studies students have no idea just how distinguished his service record was, but you should – as a pilot and instructor in the elite Strategic Air Command, a base commander, a forward air controller in Vietnam, a professor at the Air Force Academy, service in headquarters, Air Force, and the strategy department at National War College.

Farewell

By Erin Schenck (MA07)

Mara Karlin will make a wonderful successor to Tom; in welcoming her the Strategic Studies program is gaining many things – energy, recent senior government experience, and a great zest for a new enterprise. I would not describe her, though, and she would not describe herself, as a replacement for Tom: he is irreplaceable because he is unique. In Tom we had with us for many years one of the best representatives of an older generation and another time, and how much it enriched all of us.

At the conclusion of our staff ride in Scotland this past year, I raised a glass of whiskey to Tom, and recited a line of Robert Burns’ poem, John Anderson: “we’ve climbed the hill together.” So we did. Its been a wonderful journey, and I will be eternally grateful to Tom for making it with me.

Returning to Strat

Mara Karlin (MA05; PhD12)

As we all know, you never really leave the Strat Mafia. This close-knit group of bright and talented students, alumni, and professors is special, and one can walk the halls of defense establishments, think tanks, universities, businesses, and non-profits worldwide to find Strat’ers. In my most recent stint in the Pentagon—as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development—I was the fourth SAIS’er in a row to hold the position and I had the opportunity to work with Strat alumni every single day. Indeed, some of the toughest bureaucratic challenges were made much easier thanks to our shared Strat knowledge and experience. It’s in this vein that I’m delighted to return home to SAIS as Associate Professor and Associate Director of Strat.

The Department’s courses, students, and programs have exploded in recent years under the excellent tutelage of Professors Cohen and Keaney. We have two fantastic new professors: Thomas Rid, a cybersecurity expert from King’s College, and Adam Szubin, a sanctions expert who filled a number of senior roles at the Treasury Department, most recently Acting Secretary of the Treasury. We’re preparing for the International Staff Ride next spring to Korea—only the second one to date in Asia—where the history of that conflict still rings loudly today. And we’re striving to ensure Strat is a place of robust, thoughtful, and rigorous debate, both in and out of the classroom.

As all of you know too well, the global security landscape is growing more complicated and complex each day, power is shifting and growing diffuse, and the international order is under the greatest threat since 1945. These dynamics portend real difficulty for the next generation of Strat thinkers. We’re doing all we can to ensure they are ready for what that future holds.

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