

John R. "Row" Rogacki, '73

Col (Ret.) John R. Rogacki passed away unexpectedly on June 30, 2020, at Gulf Breeze Hospital in Gulf Breeze, FL. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather and always a loyal friend, Row's extraordinary talents left an indelible trail of achievement across four distinct and highly successful careers each characterized by an exceptional sense of service.

Row came to USAFA in 1969 from his hometown of Harrison, N.J. The first in his family to attend college, he introduced his classmates to many Polish delicacies such as kielbasa and pierogis. After majoring in mechanical engineering at AFA, he went on to earn his masters in mechanical engineering in 1983 followed by his Ph.D. in 1992, both from the University of Washington. Throughout his professional life, he completed a wide array of professional education programs including the Senior Executives Program in National and International Security at Harvard's JFK School of Government in 2005.

Following graduation from USAFA in 1973, Row attended pilot training at Moody and then went on to a distinguished career flying his beloved B-52, logging over 3,300 flying hours. In between a number of challenging flying assignments, Row returned to USAFA twice during the 1980s in the Engineering Department as both an associate professor and then chief of the Materials Division. Toward the latter part of his 26 distinguished years of military service, he applied his expertise to the AF Research Laboratory with two assignments at Wright-Patterson and one at Edwards, managing critical research & development programs and culminating in his assignment leading AFRL's Propulsion Directorate.

After retiring from the Air Force in 1999, Dr. Rogacki took his leadership and engineering skills to NASA where he became the inaugural director of the Space Transportation Directorate at the Marshall Space Flight Center. During his five years at NASA, Row shouldered a wide variety of responsibilities including Deputy Associate Administrator for Space Transportation Technology; Director of the Orbital Space Plane and Next Generation Launch Technology Programs; primary NASA liaison for the National Aerospace Initiative; and senior NASA representative to the Joint Aeronautical Commanders Group.

Never content to rest on past laurels and always looking for a new challenge, Row stepped into career number three in 2004 at the University of Florida as Director of the Florida Research and Engineering Education Facility. Under his leadership, the facility grew into a highly capable and internationally respected research and education entity. In 2010, he joined the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC), a not-for-profit of the Florida University System, as Associate Director. At IHMC, Row directed their Ocala, FL, research facility, working with over a dozen of the world's most renowned research scientists. Row retired from IHMC in 2016, culminating his career there by serving on the National Research Council's committee on Space Technology roadmaps.

Row is survived by his loving and cherished wife, Dr. Sharon Heise, whom he proudly described as his mentor; son John Jr. of Niceville, FL; daughter Janina of Los Angeles, CA; granddaughter Rory of Northridge, CA; and brother Stephen of Bluffton, FL. Even with all of his accomplishments, those who knew him will remember him first as a humble and steadfast companion who could see the good in everyone. We will always be inspired by memories of his warmhearted nature, sense of humor, insight, and dedication to his family, his friends, his country, and his God.

(His Loving Family and CS-19 Classmates)