

# L-4 Alumni Association, Inc

April 24, 2020

Subject: Monthly Activity Update

Dear Valued Member,

Shortly after releasing the previous activity update, and responding to the possible spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), all activities at NC State University were suspended, bringing a close to the academic year. As a sophomore fifty-years ago, I vividly remember a similar suspension following the May 4, 1970 shootings at Kent State University. Preparations for semester examinations were underway. The closure sent a shockwave across the campus, and that was that. The semester ended without finals.

Just before the COVID-19 gripped the country forcing local, state and federal governments to change our normal behavior patterns, L-4 was rechartered during the 2020 National Convention. Eight ROTC cadets from State's Department of Military Science were initiated into the National Society of Pershing Rifles, opening a new era of active PRs at L-4. Congratulations to those new members who sought to restore the PR presence at NC State University, and thanks to them, the legacy continues.

No one knows how this pandemic will affect the futures of L-4 and the L-4AA, but one thing's certain, PRs will adapt to the circumstances. We've been through crises before — think of all that has happened in the world since 1894 — we'll get through this together too. Please follow the recommended protection guidance, and stay in contact with one another through this shelter-in-place period.

And speaking of history, I've broken the tradition of limiting my remarks to a single page. A newspaper clipping was sent to me by L-4AA member Vernon Wilson. I wrote a short story based on its content and attached it for your information. I hope you enjoy it.

Vernon and I reconnected several years ago in Tucson, AZ. I hadn't seen him since he graduated in 1971. Today, Vernon resides in Las Cruces, NM.

Fraternally,

*Joe Harris*

Director of Administration

# THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDLY COMPETITION

by  
Joe Harris

Soon after the end of the Great War, a pandemic swept across the world. An estimated over fifty-million people died from the Spanish Flu, including 675,000 alone in the US.

Following the Armistice of November 11, 1918, thousands of troops from many nations remained quartered in Europe awaiting transport home. To improve American troop morale while they waited, Elwood S. Brown organized the American Expeditionary Forces Championships which morphed into the Inter-Allied Games.

Brown, an old acquaintance of General Pershing from their days together in the Philippines, proposed in a 1918 letter to General Pershing that an inter-allied competition would be a way of demonstrating America's best in sport, spirit and physical fitness. The general embraced the concept and named Brown the Director-General of the games.



The construction of a stadium to host the competition was originally contracted to a French firm. However, labor disputes stopped work. The US Army intervened and completed construction. It took army engineers only ninety-days to finish the 25,000- seat project that was named for General Pershing - commander of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe during WW-I.

Thousands of athletes and troops from various countries participated in a mini-Olympics. After years of the ravaging war and a flu epidemic, they competed during the day and partied at night. Americans completed the stadium, won most of the medals,, and fed the other competitors with military rations left over from the Great War that had ended just eight months earlier. At the conclusion of America's presence in Europe, the stadium was presented as a gift from the US to France.

A century later, American troops are deployed in harm's way at home and abroad. Another viral epidemic is wreaking havoc across the world causing the 2020 Olympic Summer Games to be pushed back a year. And, when the games return, the spirit of competition will have its desired effect. Sports and the unity created from it will help establish our new normal in the months and years ahead.