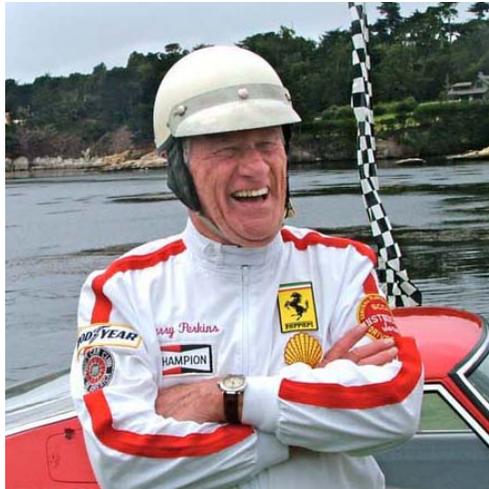# Larry Perkins, SMA '51

Larry, or "Perk" as he was known back in the day, entered Staunton Military Academy (SMA) from Natchez, MS, as a junior in the fall of 1948. It took him two junior years to become a senior and graduate with the Class of 1951. At various times, he lived in South Barracks, Kable Hall, and North Barracks, and explored every nook and cranny on the campus. For instance, how many of you know where the Armory was? He did all the usual cadet activities - including the Beat Squad - and was on the varsity swim team during his 2nd and 3rd years.

Following graduation, Larry attended Louisiana State University. But after the ascetic lifestyle at SMA, he couldn't resist the parties and those enchanting Southern girls, so he dropped out, enlisted in the USAF, and had a short but very satisfying hitch – 1953 to 1957 – as an electronics instructor. He married, began a family, returned to LSU, and earned a BS degree in Geology in 1960.

By a series of lucky coincidences, Larry acquired a leading-edge job as a systems engineer with IBM at Cape Canaveral in 1961, when both computer technology and rocket science were taking off.   This afforded him plenty of challenging opportunities and a highly-rewarding 32-year career in aerospace. While at the Cape, he gained solid experience developing advanced computer systems to support Eastern Test Range tracking and weather systems, the Atlas and Titan III launch vehicles, and the Apollo Saturn V manned lunar landing program.

He also caught a severe case of *motor racing immersion*, an addictive disease best characterized by the old adage: "If you want to make a small fortune, start with a large fortune and go racing." Through much of the '60s, Larry drove increasingly competitive amateur and professional sports car events with some success. This included winning his class in the 1966 Daytona 24 Hours with his Ferrari 250 GTO, a

superb endurance racing tool at the time and an almost priceless collector icon amongst vintage autos today. (True to his pledge to keep reducing his fortune, Larry did not hold onto that car!)

In 1969 Larry began a new chapter by quitting racing and changing day jobs, from IBM in Florida to Lockheed Martin in Colorado. He continued computer systems work on the Viking Mars Lander spacecraft program, the Venus planetary mapping mission, the Space Shuttle, a long overseas assignment for a European IT network development, an early electric car enterprise, and several classified government projects. Then came retirement – the gateway to more adventures.

Since 1994 Larry has pursued sculptural art at his studio in Highlands Ranch, CO. He has trained in life drawing and sculpture, materials fabrication, and the lost-wax bronze casting process. He executes figurative action themes, plus other subjects and styles, and his award-winning work has been shown at many venues. His portfolio includes a number of commissioned private and public pieces amongst collections in the USA and Europe. In 2002 he created the bronze plaque, "Ultimate Sacrifice", commissioned by alumnus Robert DiGiacomo, Class of '44, and presently displayed on the SMA/VWIL Wall of Honor.

Along the way, Larry remarried, had 8 grandchildren, became an Avid (with a capital "A") skier, backpacker and sailor, travelled the U.S. and returned to Europe several times, and at age 73 completed a 120-mile walking safari on game trails amongst the wild creatures of the Tsavo in southern Kenya. As of January 2015, he's 82 and still walking.

Finally, Larry has had many opportunities over the years to reflect on the immensely positive influence the SMA experience had upon his life, his work, his relationships with others, his respect for order, and his love of Country.

Larry was the primary writer of the above biography, and he ended it with, "I guess that's about the whole story." Not likely. Even though Larry is 82, I seriously doubt that this will be his whole story.
Kelly McGavock, SMA '59.

(To see examples of Larry's scultures, visit the Gallery at www.kencarylartguild.org and open Larry's portfolio.)