



HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Giving Back to Education

HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!

Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

Don't forget the Give2Grow Fundraiser on November 19th! Visit the [HPS Foundation Give2Grow](#) page and schedule your donation today! If you are interested in donating toward the Duster Pavilion project, be sure to include a dedication indicating "Duster Pavilion".

We also welcome your suggestions and comments.



Sincerely,

*Teresa Kroll, Chairman
HPS Foundation Committee*

Greg Kelso - Class of 1965

Graduate provides framework for Duster alumni to stay connected.

By Kristine Jacobson

A class of 1965 graduate spent most of his career in Texas helping test and build avionics in F-16 fighter jets, but his blood still bleeds Duster purple.

Greg Kelso returned to Holdrege this summer for his 50th class reunion sporting a purple license plate with the words DUSTER on his Texas Cadillac. "Down there, they think I sell Swiffers," Kelso said of his personalized plates. He thought the DUSTER plates would be fun for his class reunion.



Greg Kelso - Class of '65

Kelso's blood contains a lot of Duster purple as he has spent countless volunteer hours during the past 10 years creating and maintaining the Duster alumni website. The site allows alumni to enter profile and contact information to keep in touch with other Holdrege graduates and receive alumni news from the Holdrege Public Schools Foundation.

Kelso initially created a website for the class of 1965's 40th class reunion, modeling it after a similar site created by a co-worker. From there, it evolved. More than 2,200 alumni have now registered on the full alumni site. Each time a new alumnus registers, Kelso spends about 15 minutes processing the information, which has added up to a lot of hours over the past decade.

In addition, he has worked with a friend from Hastings to catalogue grave sites at FindAGrave.com. Together, they have entered more than 63,000 graves sites including burials at Prairie Home and Moses Hill cemeteries in Phelps County.

All this website work, and Kelso isn't even a web designer. He's an electrical engineer. Kelso spent his entire 32-year career at General Dynamics Corporation in Fort Worth, Texas. He started working there in 1975 after spending the first 10 years after high-school studying and seeing the world in the U.S. Navy.

Kelso always enjoyed math and science classes as a child and teen and knew from an early age that he wanted to be an engineer. "I was one of those kids who when they gave you a toy, I tore it apart to see what made it tick rather than play with it," he said.

He particularly enjoyed his math teachers - Jerry Kriha, seventh-grade math teacher; and high school math teachers Joe Buettner and John Teter; and chemistry teacher Dick Turner.

Kelso said he maintained good grades in high school, but he spent most of his time after school chasing girls and racing cars. At age 15, he rebuilt the engine in a 1954 Chevy, and repainted the vehicle red. He later worked on a Studebaker.

After high school, Kelso attended Kearney State College to study pre-engineering on a \$50 scholarship, which paid for half a semester's tuition. After two years, he transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln but found that many of his Kearney State classes didn't count toward graduation at UNL.

After a disastrous summer of 1969 that left him with a broken heart and a broken jaw from a car accident, Kelso dropped out of college before his final year.

With the Vietnam War gaining momentum at that time, Kelso discovered his name was at the top of the list to be drafted. So, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was sent to California for basic training.

"I hopped on a plane in Omaha in the snow and landed in San Diego with the palm trees," Kelso said. "I thought, 'What have I been doing in Nebraska all my life?!'"

After basic and advanced training, Kelso was stationed on the USS Valcour (AGF-1) as a fire-control technician in the Persian Gulf area. He spent almost four years in the service and was lucky to avoid any deployments in Vietnam. Instead, he saw the world in places like Bombay, India; Karachi, Pakistan; Mombassa, Kenya; Massawa, Ethiopia (now Eritrea); and Port Lewis on the island of Mauritius off the coast of Madagascar.

"I wouldn't trade my Navy days for anything," Kelso said. His military experiences helped him refocus. After serving his country for 3 years, 10 months, and 28 days, Kelso returned to UNL and earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

At the urging of a professor, he interviewed for an engineering job at General Dynamics in Texas. He was offered a job for the company, which was just awarded a contract to produce the F-16 fighter jet for the U.S. Air Force and the air forces in Belgium, Holland, Norway and Denmark.

When Kelso started at General Dynamics, they had produced two prototype jets. Kelso survived the painful first year of paperwork on his job until the real excitement began - testing F-16 fighter jets.

In September 1976, he was part of the team to test the first F-16 fighter jet with avionics on board. Avionics are the electronic systems used in aircraft to help pilots communicate, navigate, and manage flights and ammunition.

Kelso traveled to the Edwards Air Force Base in California to help train pilots and then watch and study as they flew the jets. Once pilots returned, Kelso listened to their comments and suggestions and found ways to improve the avionics of the planes.

After working on test flights in California, he moved to support the first production deliveries of the F-16s at Hill Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah, and then at a Belgian Air Force near Brussels. In Brussels, he met his wife, Sue, at a disco dance in 1979. They eventually settled back in the Fort Worth area.

Kelso retired from General Dynamics at age 60. He and Sue have one daughter, Linda, and two young grandchildren that he now has time to spoil.

Besides his work on the Duster alumni site and Find A Grave, Kelso has enjoyed "making sawdust" or remodeling his home and can occasionally be found singing karaoke. "I'm not good, but I'm loud," Kelso said.

But, mainly, he can be found enjoying life. "Life is fun," he said. "That's my main objective."

About Us

The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.

Holdrege Public Schools Foundation

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