

A Man Whose Vision Reached to Places Beyond: Robert M. Krone

by Lawrence G. Downing, DMin

Editors' Note: This was written as an appreciation of Bob Krone on the occasion of his retirement in August 2021. Sadly, Bob died before it could be published.

Now and again there arises above one's horizon a blazing comet-like individual who has the capacity to stimulate the little gray cells, broaden one's worldview, and inspire one to strive toward excellence. Col. Robert (Bob) Krone met, and in significant ways, exceeded these qualities.

There is a saying, some would say a cliché: "The apple does not fall far from the tree." This statement applied to the life of Bob Krone. Bob's parents, Dr. Max and Mrs. Beatrice Krone, were pioneers whose life work centered on music, the arts, and students. These two remarkable individuals brought together talented people and guided them to develop a vision that inspired them to unite their efforts to found Idyllwild Arts, a premier music program affiliated with the University of Southern California. Each summer since 1946, young people have participated in a unique arts experience. This yeasty, creative, and productive environment provided young Bob Krone a foundation that would sustain and guide him throughout his career. Bob was a leader. He did not drift into the leadership roles that defined his professional and personal life. He made choices, and when he made a decision, he followed through.

Col. Krone's military service introduced him to a venue quite unlike that of a performance arts milieu. It is not possible to describe the euphoria that accompanies the pilot who twists about the sky in a machine designed to conquer the air. The dancer who lofts above an entranced audience may have similar experiences. Bob, as he soared into the sky, and the adrenaline surge of the leaping dancer may not be that far apart.

Bob mastered flight skills to an extent few people appreciate. As the man who sat at the controls of a jet fighter, the force that propels the craft demands confidence, training, skill, and persistence. These traits Bob had in abundance. These are the skills, along with others, he took with him after retirement from the Air Force. Bob did not spend his retirement entranced by the rolling surf. He enrolled in the UCLA School of Political and Policy Science, where he completed the requirements to be granted a PhD degree.

Bob began Career II as a USC Business School professor. Upon his retirement from USC, Paul Cone, PhD, another USC School of Business professor, encouraged Bob to consider a third career: join the La Sierra University School of Business and Management in Riverside.

Career III opened new vistas. Bob's new colleagues welcomed him, and he brought with him his commitment to excellence, his leadership and educational skills, and his

ability to inspire others. LSU is where Bob and I first met. Dr Paul Cone, a long-time friend introduced us. Something clicked and we were friends and colleagues from that day on.

Bob and I collaborated on numerous LSU projects. We participated in on-line classes for the MBA program at Pacific Adventist University in Papua New Guinea, and other venues.

Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets. It is one thing that will never fail us. (Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519; one of Col. Robert Krone's favorite quotes)

Bob was a go-for-it kind of person. Did this trait reflect his fighter pilot days? It is true, if one is to come out in one piece, the person who pushes the throttle of an F-105 to the firewall will do well to have more than a general idea of what 26,500 lbs. of thrust can do when unleashed. Preparation and split-second response are essential for survival. Preparedness, methodical evaluation, care. These traits were imbedded in Bob's soul. He was not a Hot Shot fighter jock! That label did not apply to Bob's relationships with colleagues and friends! *Au contraire*, Bob was the ultimate team player.

There are those who advocate teamwork: Bob demonstrated how teamwork functions. In his various roles, Bob wore the leadership mantle lightly. He was a gentle, caring person who valued collegiality and discussion and encouraged freedom to think and do. His teaching style, developed in response to his interactions with students, stressed personal responsibility to delve into a subject. He did not promote the traditional didactic methodology. He came to his classes with the conviction that the students were scholars rather than sponges to soak up second-hand knowledge dispensed from another's experience. He expected the scholar to select a topic, perform original and secondary research, the former often utilizing *Ideas Unlimited* as the research tool to conduct the original research upon which a paper would develop. His didactic methodology was to encourage, offer suggestions, and listen. He also, as was his wont, kept an open mind should an interesting opportunity appear on the horizon. This *open mind* attitude led him to develop Careers IV and V.

The idea of establishing an educational process for those active in the Space program or who want to be part of a growing industry stimulated Bob's creative juices. He shared his ideas of developing a Space educational program with friends and colleagues. The upshot of Bob's *far-out* idea was to bring together individuals who, like he, were intrigued by the potential Space, with its unlimited resources, offered those who dared to venture forth. Hope was also a factor; hope for humanity's reboot.

From these seminal thoughts, shared with peers and those who were interested in Space, was birthed Kepler Space Institute (KSI). Bob, as KSI president, began to build a Space education team. This is where I came in. Col. Krone suggested he and I collaborate to create classes for scholars who want to pursue a career in the Space industry or are now involved in some aspect of a Space organization and wish to further their education.

An invitation from Bob shares certain qualities of a General Quarters command. Our association was, for me, both a unique educational opportunity and a personal challenge that took me beyond my educational and experiential levels. Thankfully, the man at the helm was a skilled navigator who guided students and staff alike! This is a gift one can only accept with gratitude: it is beyond price!

Bob was not content to lead a newly birthed graduate-level educational institution. He carried within him a gene or two that nudged him to publish and to look over the mountain! That *look* resulted in the launch of the *Journal of Space Philosophy*. Bob served as Editor-in-Chief from its first issue until August 2021. JSP publishes articles related to Space authored by individuals who are associated with the Space community. The most recent JSP, vol. 10, no. 1, like its fourteen predecessors, addresses matters related to Space and gives recognition to Joel Isaacson, Yehezkel Dror, and others who have influenced the Space community. The Journal is accessible online at no cost.

As impressive and influential as JSP and his books may be, Bob's first love was teaching and interacting with those who were enrolled in the numerous classes he conducted over the decades. He came into class sessions with confidence in the scholars and their ability to carry out the selected projects. His method was that of a coach, an enabler, a confidence builder. His satisfaction was gained when the finished product has brought about a deeper understanding of a situation and has suggested an improvement in what now is. It was the gentle nudge that directs scholars to achieve their best. It was this quiet grace that we who knew Bob valued. We were fascinated that a man of such quiet grace could have such a powerful and positive influence on so many. There is a saying that quiet waters run deep. More than one person has applied this truism to the life of Col. Robert M. Krone, PhD (Ret).

It would be possible to continue sharing multiple experiences and discussions that took place in Bob's and my numerous teaching opportunities. The reader will have long since concluded that I admired, respected, and valued this man. He was a person who holds a firm and cherished place in my soul!

Copyright © 2021, Larry Downing. All rights reserved.

Editors' Notes: Along with the KSI community and our colleagues in the field of Space Philosophy, we miss Bob dearly. We are also honored and humbled to carry on the legacy he began when he founded this journal and shepherded its publication over the past decade. As Gordon moves into the role of Editor-in-Chief and Mark comes on as Associate Editor, we know we have big shoes to fill and an important memory to honor. We are grateful to our friend, Professor Larry Downing, Bob's longtime collaborator in KSI Space Philosophy courses, for penning this tribute. ***Gordon Arthur and Mark Wagner.***