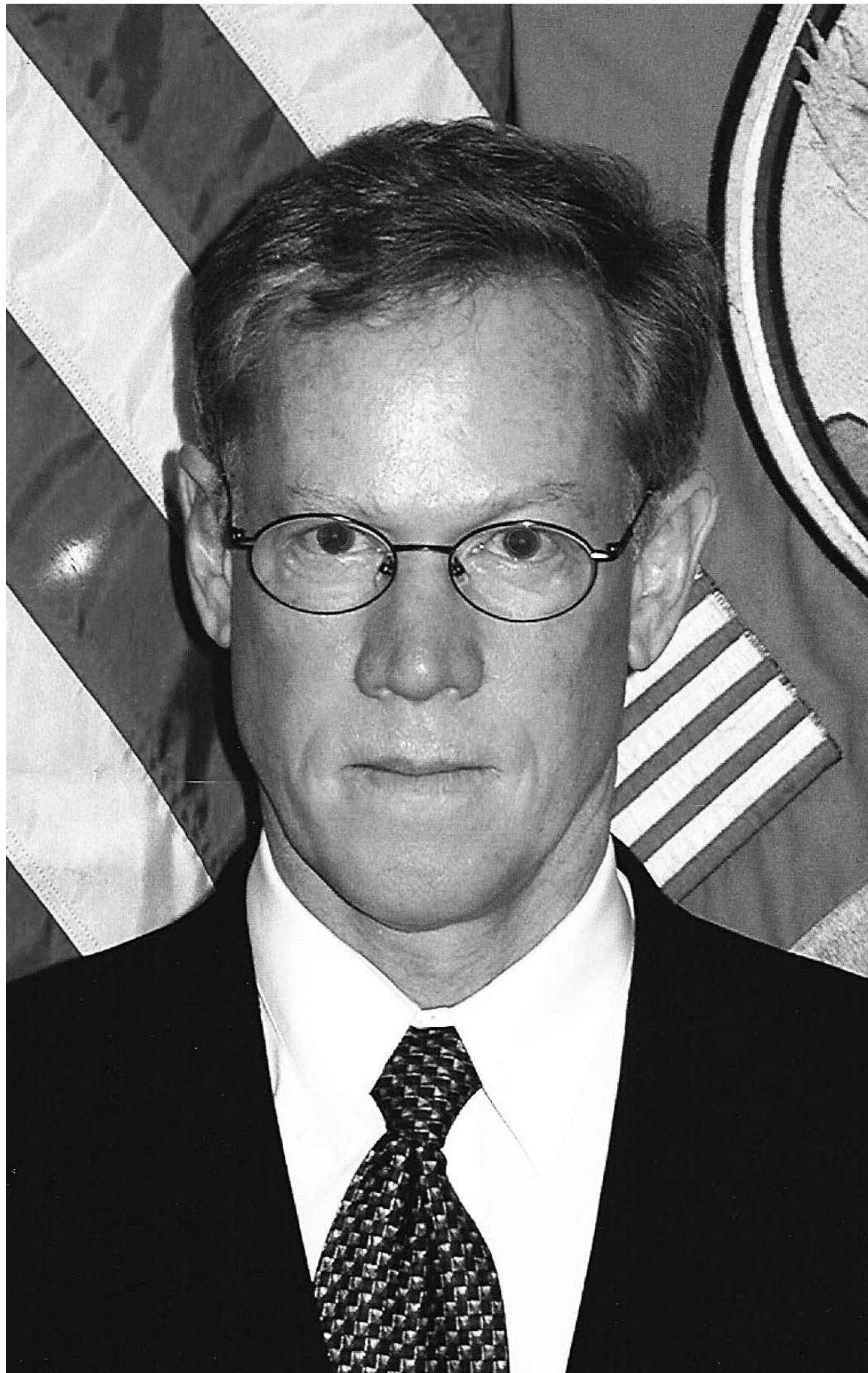


OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

2013



WILLIAM BACH Class of 1961



After a youth of summers spent on the Illinois River, Bach ended his river career in mid-August 1965 by swimming the 17 mile distance from the Marseilles locks to the Starved Rock Marina in six hours. He graduated from the University of Iowa earlier that summer and left the following week for USMC Officer Training School and immediate deployment as an infantry officer in the Vietnam War. After 20 months of combat duty, Bach left Vietnam and the Marine Corps with a Purple Heart and a Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. He returned to Vietnam in 1969 with the United States Department of State and served throughout the country in various senior advisory and political reporting positions until the war's end in April 1975. He was considered one of the top American Vietnamese linguists. After the fall of Saigon, which he narrated in a History Channel documentary in 1995, Bach continued his Foreign Service career, serving with distinction in Nigeria, Venezuela, Germany, Australia, Bosnia, and, from 1995-98, once again in Vietnam. The State Department sent him to Johns Hopkins for a master's in international affairs in 1984, after which he served on the National Security Council, contributing to United States strategy in response to Gorbachev's Perestroika initiatives. Bach was assigned to the United States Embassy in Bonn from 1987-91, where he won awards for his reporting on the effects of Soviet détente on German attitudes toward NATO and, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, on German unification and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Returning to Vietnam to open the United States Embassy in Hanoi from 1995-98 as the Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy, Bach set up groundbreaking exchange and educational programs to advance human rights, democracy, rule of law, and privatization, once again winning State Department honors for performance and linguistic ability. Bach was also honored for his service as Political Advisor to the American commanding general of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, facilitating the return of refugees to areas of genocidal "ethnic cleansing," such as Srebrenica. He ended his career with the State Department with senior positions in the bureaus of International Counter-narcotics and Law Enforcement and Western Hemispheric Affairs, where he developed and supervised programs to combat opium trafficking and train police in Afghanistan, promoted intelligence sharing in Southeast and Central Asia, and innovated measures of effectiveness for exchange programs in the Western Hemisphere. Bach published numerous articles in foreign affairs journals during his 40-year career and frequently testified before Congress on various issues.