



General Donald R. Keith **31 January 1927 – 9 September 2004**

General Keith was the Chairman of the Board, U.S. Field Artillery Association, from October 2002 until just weeks before his death, when he retired from the Board. Before his retirement from the Army, he was the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command (now the U.S. Army Materiel Command), Alexandria, Virginia.

Donald Keith was born 31 January 1927 in Ludington, Michigan. During World War II, he served as an enlisted soldier in the Army before attending the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He graduated from the Academy in 1949 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery. He later attended Columbia University in New York City where he earned a Master of the Arts in Science Teaching in 1958 before being assigned to the faculty of the Chemistry Department at West Point. In 1982, the University of Akron awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Law Degree.

After Graduating from West Point, General Keith served in various battery and battalion positions in the 517th Field Artillery Battalion in Wetzlar, Germany, and as battery commander and S-3 in the 2nd Guided Missile Battalion, White Sands, New Mexico. Later as a Major, he served in Eighth Army Operations in the Republic of Korea during the tense days of the Cuban missile crisis.

General Keith commanded artillery units at all levels, including the 5th Battalion, 73rd Field Artillery and the 36th Field Artillery Group, U.S. Army Europe. He also served as the Executive Officer, Office of the Chief of Research and Development, at the Pentagon, followed by a tour in Vietnam from 1971 to 1972, where he served as the Director, Research and Analysis Directorate, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, in the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). From 1972 through 1974, General Keith was back in Washington, DC, in the Office of the Chief of Research and Development as the Director of Developments. He then became the Director of Weapon Systems in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Research, Development, and Acquisition, also in the Pentagon, until October 1976.

From 9 October 1976 to 21 October 1977, then Major General Keith served as the Chief of Field Artillery, Commandant of the Field Artillery School, and Commanding General of the Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill. Following his tour at Fort Sill, General Keith returned to Washington, DC, where he served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Research, Development,

and Acquisition until August 1981, overseeing the largest modernization program ever undertaken by the Army: “The Big Five.”

Upon promotion to General, he assumed command of the Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command in Alexandria. He retired on 28 June 1984 with more than 35 years of faithful service to the nation.

After retiring from the Army, General Keith joined Cypress International, a defense consulting company, in September 1984. After more than 15 years with Cypress, he retired as the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer in December 1999.

General Keith also served on several boards, including the National Defense Industrial Association, the Defense Systems Management College Alumni Association, the Fort Sill National Bank, and the National Research Council Board on Army Science and Technology. He served on the Committee on Army Science and Technology for Homeland Security as he remained committed to the nation’s security. The committee dedicated its second report to General Keith in recognition of “his quiet voice of reason, untiring dedication, and exemplary efforts toward making life better and safer for America and her Soldiers.”

General Keith’s awards and decorations included the Distinguished Service Medal (two awards), the Legion of Merit (three awards), the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal (two awards), and several foreign awards and service ribbons.

The generous General Donald R. Keith endowment will significantly enhance cadet education programs in the Department of Systems Engineering for many years to come.