

Shipmates:

I attended the Waldo Memorial Bench Dedication this weekend in Methuen, MA with Craig Diffie, Glen Ives, Bill Yeager, Vince Balderamma, John Kovalcik, John Ehlers, and Brian Kirk. It was a beautiful day, and Vince Balderama orchestrated the presentation and speeches like a professional conductor. Glen Ives' speech certainly reflected our feelings and was magnificent - I pasted it below. John Ehlers had to perform some last minute micromanagement which actually caused him a sunburn, but his efforts, the contributions of the Class and John Semcken and the assistance of Carol Waldie and the Mayor - produced a Memorial that certainly befits Waldo.

The Memorial bench has Waldo's name on the face and in front of the bench inlaid on a granite slab is the following: "DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF KENNETH E. WALDIE" "A native of Pittsburgh, PA, a veteran and a 1978 graduate of the US Naval Academy, Ken settled in Methuen in 1984 to raise his family and pursue his career at the Raytheon Corporation. A devoted husband to Carol and father to Andrew, Jeff, Meredith and JT; Ken was also an avid sportsman and sports fan, especially of his beloved Pittsburgh professional teams and Penn State University. He was a fixture cheering for his children and coaching at virtually every youth sports venue in the greater Methuen area.

Ken was a passenger on AA Flight 11 on September 11, 2001 when he was lost in the senseless acts of violence that day at the World Trade Center.

This bench is dedicated to Ken's memory by his Naval Academy classmates in cooperation with his loving family and the city of Methuen."

Jocko

Glen Ives speech.....

Carol, Andrew, Jeff, Meredith and JT -- Mayor Pollard, family and friends -- and my Naval Academy classmates - good afternoon. I am grateful to be here - in fact - there is no place else I'd rather be than right here, right now, with each of you - you represent those I care very deeply for and those with whom I share an unbreakable and perpetual bond - that bond is why we are all here this afternoon - that bond is my friend and my classmate - Ken Waldie.

I'm not surprised that even now - today - Ken continues to demonstrate his special talent - one that has always distinguished him - that very special talent - that natural gift - of bringing people together - bringing us together.

We dedicate this memorial in Kenny's honor - we the United States Naval Academy Class of 1978. Because 1978 was so long ago - too long ago - a reasonable question you might ask is - why" How many classmates from "normal" colleges - 25 years later - desire and feel compelled to remember and

memorialize a fallen classmate - a classmate that they had seen - maybe just a few times since graduation day"

I'd like to answer that question and share with you briefly - why we - Kenny's classmates - are here today - what today - this event - and this memorial means to us.

I mentioned "normal colleges" earlier - and in the context that I used - one might infer that the Naval Academy is an "abnormal" college. Webster defines abnormal - not surprisingly - as: not normal - not average - not typical - not usual - irregular to a considerable degree. Well - in many ways - those of us who went there - know that Webster is pretty close to the mark.

The Naval Academy is abnormal - because we wear uniforms - we march in parades - we stand at attention in formations - we even sit at attention at the dining table - besides the normal academic subjects - we have to take courses on how to be a good leader - how to drive a boat - how to navigate at sea - we learn Morse code, signal flags and flashing light signals - we learn how to shoot a rifle and a pistol - how to fight fires - how to sleep instantly - even standing up - anywhere in any circumstances - how to buy a Corvette on Midshipman and Ensign pay.

It's a place where haircuts are free and take less than 2 minutes - a place where if you want to go for a swim - you have to wear the most unsightly and unbecoming

pair of blue and gold Speedos - at least 3 sizes too small - that you've ever seen. I think you would all agree with me - that that's abnormal.

But it's abnormal in other ways too. You're tested and challenged there at the Naval Academy - from the day you arrive until the day you graduate - you are tested and challenged every day - academically, physically, mentally, emotionally.

For some of us we take it in stride - for others of us - it's tough - so tough you aren't sure whether you can do it - or even whether you want to do it.

I wish I could tell you that when it does get tough - when it gets to be too much - that it's something very noble that keeps you there - keeps you going - something like your sense of duty - your commitment to serve our country.

When you're 17 or 18 years old and fresh out of high school - that commitment - those sentiments - are there and strong in your heart - but they surely aren't the ones that carry you.

It's something more -- it's your classmates - they carry you - they help you - to not only make it through - but to make it a life experience you can never ever forget - an experience that inspires you even 25 years later - an experience that blesses you with the greatest gift of all - the gift of enduring friendship with the truest, most wonderful guys you'll ever know.

What that abnormal environment does - is what every tough and challenging life situation does - it brings you together in a very special and indescribable way - because shared adventure - shared adversity - strengthen trust and a sense of commitment to one another - like nothing else --- especially as young men growing up together for 4 unforgettable years at Annapolis - which at the time for us - represented a lifetime together.

When you are 17 or 18 years old - to share an experience that very few people understand - that experience we call the United States Naval Academy - well - it forges friendships - a brotherhood - and a determined confidence that carry you through those 4 years there - and forever.

Ken Waldie was our leader - he drew us together as a team - a company - a class - as friends. On the court, on the field, as a friend, as a professional - in every aspect of life that really matters - Ken Waldie represents the very best - the most compassionate - the most loyal - the most committed.

I am a Captain in the United States Navy today - and I've been privileged to command - lead some of the finest young Americans our country has ever known - with aircraft and weapons more technologically advanced and capable than ever before.

I truly believe we have become the strongest and most capable Navy in the history of our world.

And we are blessed to be in a position to help ensure not only the freedom and security of our countrymen - but the freedom of our fellow human beings around the world as well. Our strength is a blessing - and Ken Waldie has been part of our strength.

Many of our leaders serving in the Navy and in our communities today - were touched and inspired by Ken - by his uncompromising integrity - his iron will and determination - his tremendous energy, moral strength and confidence -- his plain goodness and sense of humor.

Many of our classmates he inspired years ago - today lead businesses, companies and government institutions - they command our ships, aircraft carriers and air wings - they lead our communities and they lead our Navy - and they have made a real difference in our just fight against terrorism and those who try to harm innocent human beings.

They are what they are - and if they are like me - Ken Waldie's example and friendship made a difference - makes a difference.

This all began when we were just wide-eyed youngsters. He set the pace and the example for all of us - he worked hard at academics (usually) and he worked hard on the athletic field (always).

He didn't win trophies or big personal recognition - what he did win was enduring respect and genuine admiration from every classmate and athlete he ever served

with at USNA - it didn't matter whether it was varsity swimming, brigade boxing, company intramurals or a pickup game of basketball at the multipurpose gym.

You just knew that if Kenny was on your team - you were going to hustle - you were going to win. If he was on the other team - you knew you had a real fight on your hands.

In all my years of playing and being a part of sports and those who play and compete - in all my years of flying Navy aircraft off Navy warships at sea - there has been no one more tenacious - no one more reliable and rock solid when things looked really tough - no one who hustled harder - than Ken Waldie.

He was never the fastest, the quickest or the most talented - that just didn't matter - he was the strongest of heart - strongest of will - he was always the leader on the floor, in the pool, on the field or in the ring. He was a champion - in a much more significant and meaningful way than anyone else I have ever known.

He awakened in me an inner strength I didn't know I had - he did that for many of us - that strength has carried me through all of my tours in the Navy - as a Navy pilot and as a Naval Officer.

Ken Waldie started me down a road that has been a wonderful dream come true - filled with the finest people God ever made and exciting, rewarding experiences I'll forever cherish.

I'm grateful to Ken for blessing me with a true and special friendship so early in my life that continues to inspire me 29 years later - and will inspire me forever.

According to Webster - one more time - the purpose of a memorial is to help people remember a person or event.

I don't think most of us need anything to help us remember Ken - the energy and goodness from his life and now his memory are blessings that will never diminish - only grow stronger.

So I don't look at this beautiful marble bench as something to ensure that we remember Ken - I look at it as a tribute - a small but meaningful way to let everyone know what Ken Waldie means to us - and that he's always in our hearts - I can hear him right now - "come on Glenny - let's hustle - we can do it!" And when Kenny says it - I know we can.

Johnny Ehlers told me earlier when he tried to describe where we were going to place this memorial - that it was the perfect place for Ken - next to a ball field - and surely it is - because any place where there are boys and girls playing hard at a sport they love - any place with Kenny's name on it - I know is a place that is home to true champions - champions of heart and champions of selfless service.

That's what this special place - this perfect place - will always represent to me - the home of a champion - the home of my friend.



Mayor Pollard, Mr. Difiore, Mr. Russo, and Mr. Byron - who designed and placed this beautiful memorial bench - and my classmate Johnny Ehlers - who was the love, energy and drive behind it all. Thank you - thank you sincerely - from all of us and particularly from the Class of '78 - for helping to make today as beautiful as it has been - for providing for us another wonderful and enduring memory of Ken.

Carol, Andrew, Jeff, Meredith and JT - you can bet that we're standing tall and we're standing proud - to be a Waldie - or a friend of a Waldie - or a classmate of a Waldie - is special - it's a forever kind of special.

To the United States Naval Academy Class of 1978 - you represent our best friend and classmate Ken Waldie - and everything we love and respect about him.

We hope that this memorial serves the purpose - of not helping you to remember your husband and dad - because again - you don't need any help there -

But more to remember that you always have us - his classmates - in your corner -- --- and as he was committed to us - we are committed to you - just like this beautiful marble bench - rock solid and always.

And in closing - I have to say this ----- to perpetuate the great Waldo's notorious penchant for inspirational catch phrases - "If I don't see you in the future - I'll see you in the pasture."

God bless you always Waldie family - God bless Ken - God bless all of us who love him.

Thank you.

An afterthought - I'd like to share one last thought that I briefly touched upon earlier - one that occurred to me as I flew into Logan International yesterday - a cool, blustery and overcast Boston late afternoon --- a contrast to the blue, sunny skies Ken reserved for us today.

Ken was always the catalyst back at school - we all seemed to naturally draw together around him - and good things - wonderful things - always happened.

It struck me that once again - he brings us together and good things - wonderful things happen. Last night and today have been a magical time for me - just to be with some of my classmates - here - with a common purpose once again.

29 years ago it was to just make it through plebe summer - today it is to honor Ken and his family. We went to the Red Sox game and froze together last night - we camped in the same hotel room - all of us jammed in one room - talking and catching up and watching the 1 AM version of Sportscenter together.

We didn't even have to "shake off " to see who would get the floor - Jocko being the tough Marine volunteered.

We played some hoops together on an outdoor court at our hotel this morning - and now we're together again - here at Ken's Memorial.

I can't help but think that Kenny's smiling - maybe even laughing - particularly as he watched us try and play hoop this morning - the game he loved to play with us.

I feel as though I've gone back 29 years and recaptured some of the wonderful magic of those tough but wonderful times at USNA. It reminds me - that today - just like back then - it's all and always - about your classmates.