

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND FOUNDATION

SHIPMATE

SEPTEMBER 2020



'78

Life Membership: 81%

Donor Participation: 6.80%

Pres: **Glen Woods**

Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**

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Let's see, since we last left normality everyone seems to be anticipating a "new normal" - whatever that is or will be. All I know is I just want to call up friends to meet for a drink, watch a game, hit a few balls or grab a bite without having to don some modified level of MOPP gear. Somewhere in heaven, Rod Serling is reciting his Twilight Zone intro, "Submitted for your approval...." For now, I'll just use it to intro some brief news since the last column. Submitted for your approval....

Lew Wolfrom (30th Co) wrote that his company mate, **Bruce Gearey** (30th Co) and his son Noah, passed through Atlantic Beach on 9 June on their way to Bradenton, FL to visit Bruce's mom. Lew said that Bruce has been back on the golf course and shooting scores in the 70's, so it appears he has recovered from his battle last year with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. He went on to add that company mate, Dr. **Dick Boehme**, our "class Neurologist", who counseled Bruce throughout his GBS recovery last year, just moved into his new home down the street from Lew in Atlantic Beach. Consequently, they had a little 30th Company get together at Dick's place. Lew's wife, Kathryn, and Dick's wife Ingrid also attended. After dinner, Dick entertained them in his piano room, with a concert of his own compositions. After the concert, and just by coincidence, Brenda and **Brad Thomann** (30th Co too) called and were able to join them virtually from their home in Colorado. In addition to the 4 of them and their spouses, they have ten 30th Companymates planning to be in Annapolis this month for an annual mini reunion during the 18-20 September weekend.



Speaking of classmates as neighbors, **Michael Shumaker** (13th Co) reported another coincidence of a classmate living "down the street. He reported that on the evening of Memorial Day, he was out for a bike ride when he spied a parked car with a VA license plate: "USNA78". Initially, only the USNA caught his attention, but then he realized the class was 78 and stopped. He rang the doorbell of the house. A woman answered. Michael asked if the parked car belonged to her house and then he mentioned that he too is USNA '78! She said the car is her husband's and called [my 11th Company mate- and a former room-mate] **George Billy** to the door! George and his wife told Michael about how they enjoyed the '78 cruise mentioned in a previous Shipmate. George works for Northrop Grumman in Annapolis. His drive takes about 60 minutes while Michael's commute on public transit to Coast Guard HQ in Anacostia takes 80 minutes. Michael said he's lived in his house since 2000, but George has been in his since 1992. The crow fly distance between their homes is about 1,500 yds, but the combination of woods, a creek, and winding streets makes a bike trip of about 1.4 miles. George's part of the neighborhood is isolated from Michael's and until COVID Michael's bike riding had taken him in the opposite direction. When COVID-19 first hit, he encountered a bearded Youngster jogging. Michael called out to him assuming that he must have been an alumnus because of the beard. The Mid told him USNA had shifted to distance learning. [Hence, the facial

hair.] Michael also reported calling his old 13th Company roommate, **Ernie Sanchez** out in San Diego, and his nuke power school roommate, **Joe Britain** (13th Co), now retired from civil service in Yuma, AZ. Michael said both are fine. Thanks for the update, Michael.

Congrats to **Mark Ferguson** (7th Co). In June he checked in with news that he and Laure are doing well. They've settled into Norfolk, VA after finishing the renovation of their home just in time for quarantine. Their son Andrew got married in St Andrews, Scotland last August and is heading off to the University of Edinburgh for his MBA. Their daughter Ellie is living in northern Virginia and working for a defense contractor.

In late June, **Dave Babcock** (6th Co) checked in from Pensacola, FL to report that the 2nd Annual CAPT **Bill Yeager** Award for Security Cooperation Excellence at Naval Education and Training Security Assistance Field Activity (NETSAFA) was awarded to Trena Bartley by current CO, CAPT Dave and of course, **Karen Yeager**. NETSAFA was Bill's command when he passed away almost 12 years ago. (NETSAFA manages the execution of all international training for the Navy.) The award proudly remembers Bill's legacy.



As this was being put together, we recognized the 46th Anniversary of our I-day. A lot of comments were made about memories of that day. There were a lot of Facebook comments. (I'll have to post more of them in future columns.) **John "Skogs" Skogsberg** (23rd Co) posted a pic of he and his dad. Skogs was wearing his Dixie Cup rather salty- more like a night watch cap. **John Storvick** (21st Co) explained that "my name tag was misspelled ;) Took half the summer to get it changed from Strovick to Storvick." **Don Schneider** (18th Co) recalled the "sandblowers" lament, "I remember that day. All of my issued uniforms needed tailoring to fit properly, and there was no time to tailor the "White Works". My sleeves were about 6 inches too long, and my pant legs were 6 to 8 inches too long. I tried rolling them up the best I could so that they would not show. The act of marching to T-Court started the un-rolling process. By the time I raised my hand to take the OATH, everything was completely un-done and no-one could see my hand. I felt like a really little kid." [Me too, Don. Until we got them tailored, we all had staples and tape tactically placed. They never seemed to hold up and we wound up with our white works drooping on us like Dopey's clothes!] Our 36th Company classmates kept me in the loop of a string of their comments and recollection that reflected what we all felt. Among them: **Paul Ross** noted like most that "Wow...how time flies...seems like yesterday..." **Duane Schoon** added that "Hard to believe how much has happened since then and how much those next 4 years impacted the rest of our lives!" **Les Wallace** echoed a common sentiment, "I just remember saying 'What the Hell just happened?'" **Jim Carr** remembered thinking, "Look at all these aces. I'll never measure up." [Looking at our class successes, I'd say we did, Jim.] **Bob Engel** said he remembered thinking, "Get me the hell out of here!".



Bob Engel on I-day



Skogs and his dad

Well, the Class of 2024 has certainly had memorable “phased-in I days”, as they checked-in over four separate days. As certain as that was unique, equally likely they’ll have an even more unconventional Plebe summer and year. Perhaps they’ll get to experience what many of their predecessors did – a *full* Plebe year. Whatever the differences, one thing they’ll have in common to all classes’ Plebe summer experiences will be the hot, muggy Annapolis summer weather, a little fear, anxiety, and self-doubt. But they also feel proud at their tempering and the beginning of their transformation from civilian to military - and future officers and leaders. Most especially, they’ll feel the forging of strong bonds with classmates and life-long friends and comrades who would do anything for you. But for a moment they’ll definitely have an occasion to experience the “1,000-yard stare” and feel what **Rick Lowell** (36th Co) remembered “I remember just being dazed and confused. Perhaps that’s never changed! LOL!”

Launchin’ Spot Four!



Rick Lowell - Dazed and Confused

'79

Life Membership: 91%
Donor Participation: 5.07%

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Facebook Group: **USNA Class of 1979**

Website: www.usna79.com

Greetings, 79ers!

I don’t have much to report this month. Which isn’t surprising, really, since most of us have been limited to virtual contact during these last few months. But a couple of folks broke out of their mandatory isolation long enough to forward a couple tidbits.

Chuck Dixon emailed to say that a group of regulars from the ‘79 tailgaters gathered a few times for a “virtual happy hour”, spending time online catching up with their adult beverages of choice. Attendees joining Deb and Chuck included Chris and **Dave Jackson**, Janet and **Sean Cate**, Valerie and **Fred Gerheiser**, Anne and **Jeff McFadden**, and Jean and **Dave Kreuger**. Chuck reports that everyone is in hope of “live” gatherings when football season resumes.

Back in March, in the early days of isolation, “COVID beards” became a “thing”. Even though I keep my finger squarely on the pulse of pop culture, I missed this trend when it first began. By the time I became aware of it, barber shops and hair salons had reopened and the trend faded as quickly as it began. Chuck was kind (!) enough to share a pic of his beard. For some reason, it came in a lot grayer (more gray?) than he remembered – not sure how that happens...



Chuck Dixon's "COVID beard"

Since December, Janet and **Sean Cate** have been enjoying retirement and country living on a lake in western Virginia. It was a difficult transition – after all, one does not easily give up the opportunity to commute twice a day in DC metro traffic! But the Cates were up to the task. Sean asked that I include this note to all of ‘79:

✉ I was overwhelmed by the many generous comments from over 100 classmates who took time to send me a note thanking me for the work I did as your Class President when I retired on December 31st. This acknowledgement of your generous comments is too long overdue, but is submitted nonetheless to thank each and every one of you, plus the hundreds more who I spoke with at the Reunion last Fall, for all of your kind words. Together we accomplished some great things.

I had the high honor of serving five years as Class Vice-President, then 20 years as Class President, during which time we came together to support a variety of projects. This included the maintenance of the Brigade Commander Plaque in Bancroft Hall; the Civil War Arch at Navy- Marine Corps Memorial Stadium; the Trident Scholarship program; and Navy sports. We grew our ‘79 tailgate presence as well and enjoyed our every-five years reunions. I am most proud to have played a small role in the selection of our classmate (and my shipmate) **Sean Stackley** for the USNA Distinguished Graduate award.

Our class is now in the good and capable hands of my company-mate, roommate for one year, and

tremendous friend, Dave Jackson, who has already moved the bar I set to a higher level. Please continue to support our class as you all did during my tenure and we will continue to make history, particularly as we link up with the great Class of 2029 in a few years.

Thanks again Classmates! With sincere appreciation, Sean Cate 791099, Beat Army!!!

And that, classmates, is all I have. As restrictions get lifted and life starts approaching normal again, drop me a line to say hi.

See you next month!

Wiz...

'80

Life Membership: 96%
Donor Participation: 6.86%

Pres: **Tim Kobosko**

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Greetings Classmates,

The Plebes are arriving in four waves – isolating for 14 days and then beginning Plebe Summer – or whatever it’s going to be this year. The Nation is in partial lockdown due to a pandemic, we are experiencing a national racial transformation and discussion and we are in economic free-fall. Other than that, not much going on. Interesting times we are living! Happy July 4th 2020!

A few updates for the Class.

1. We have shifted the 40th Reunion date to the weekend of 23-25 April 2021 because of the COVID-19 restrictions, ensuring the safety of our Classmates and concerns about limiting large gatherings. We did not make this decision in a vacuum but rather with all of the inputs of the NAAA, Alumni Association, national inputs and concerns that the State of Maryland might not be open yet for our event. We are in the process of updating the website and registration page along with shifting each of our events to the new dates. Stand by for more information and look to our Class emails for updates.

BLUE & GOLD OFFICER

Would you like to mentor interested students about the opportunities at USNA? Become a Blue & Gold Officer and contact USNA Admissions at 410-293-1813.