

Pres: **John Rudder**Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**

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I was sitting here at home; content with a cold one and my mail pile for the day. What do I find but a great big grab bag from *Shipmate*. I was wondering why I hadn't heard from them lately and feeling fat, dumb and happy that I had a little time until the next deadline. Come to think of it, that deadline should be soon. Opening up the package, I peruse all the goodies sent me, FTHNRs (Michael's new rabbit really loves reading those.), returned photos and old archive pics too, an old disc from a previous submission, some writing guidelines and other goudge and a new schedule for submit... WHOA, GENERAL QUARTERS! GENERAL QUARTERS! Man your keyboards and fire up the e-mail trons. That deadline is at your six mister! And after I made a fuss last month!!!... So here's a quick rap-a-tap, zap and flash message to the editor with a request to move KR aside and squeeze this in. [Ed. Note: *It's nice to know that you secretaries at least open what we send to you. Anything for you, Vince!!!! :-)*...Nancy] Here goes with thanks to **Craig Diffie** for the 5 minute alert news.

Our French correspondent (a.k.a. Craig) writes... He had briefly sighted **Dave Buss** aboard *GEORGE WASHINGTON* when GW conducted a port visit to Cannes, France, over the Fourth of July. Dave who is the CO of the Blue Blasters, the A-6 squadron deployed in GW's air wing. Dif' had a chance to see him again since then. Incidentally, Craig had just received a Change of Command invitation from Dave. The Change of Command was scheduled for the end of August. It looked like Dave was next heading to War College in Newport. Also aboard GW, Craig saw **Dave Mercer**. He had recently taken command of one of the F/A-18 squadrons (sorry but Craig couldn't/don't remember the number). The two Daves were out and about doing the diplomacy thing in fine style and **Dave Buss** managed to conquer the city of Nice with his onslaught of French language ability.

On 31 July, Craig went down to Naples for Admiral Smith's retirement and for Admiral Lopez' assumption of command as CINCUSNAVEUR and CINCOSOUTH. During the post-ceremony reception, he ran into **John Newcomb** and his lovely wife, Judy. John is the XO of NSA Naples and has been in Naples the same two years that Craig has been in Toulon, but they were each unaware of the others "not-so-distant presence".

Until just a couple of day ago [beginning of August], **George Koucheravy** had his sub (yes, he owns it!), NORFOLK, on a port visit to Toulon. Toulon being the French sister city to Norfolk, George and his crew were quite warmly received. Craig and George had the occasion to dine together and George imparted to Craig a bit of his leadership philosophy—seems to be working well.

In true, PR fashion, Craig went on to elaborate about the "Big E", "The mighty, mighty ENTERPRISE—the world's most famous ship, the world's fastest aircraft carrier, and the world's longest carrier (all this according to the Battlegroup Commander, and if he said it, it must be true)—just left France after a six-day port visit in Cannes. Aboard her are **Mark Fox**, **Alex Hnarkis**, **Skip Bayes**, and **Rudy Costanza**. Mark is CO of an F/A-18 squadron (Again, Craig didn't know the number. What ever happened to "I'll find out, sir? BRACE up Mr. Diffie!"). Alex is CO of the world famous Jolly Rogers VF-103. Skip is CO of HS-15; and Rudy is the miniboss. I know what you all are thinking about that

being redundant—but just keep in mind that Rudy's the guy who tells all the rest of them whether or not they can take-off or land. Rudy has already finished his command tour with an E-2 squadron. All were about 6 weeks into their deployment and looking fairly chipper. They gathered in the VF-103 ready room and took a group photo and also took another during a luncheon hosted by the city of Cannes. [Note, if this doesn't make it in this month—look for the photo next month!]. While aboard *ENTERPRISE*, Craig also ran into **Pete Frano**. Pete is the XO of the A-6 squadron and started at USNA during that hot summer of '74. Apparently, Pete was with us for a couple of years in the 18th Co. before departing for greener pastures, but still blue skies and deep water.

Craig relayed the following **Skip Bayes** story: During pre-deployment work-ups, one of Skip's boys was out doing a pax transfer. The H-60 experienced a little mechanical problem (a subcontractor part I must interject—not a Sikorsky piece of work!) had to return to mother. One of the passengers during this ordeal was none other than **John Stalnaker**. Apparently John was not too thrilled in being stayed from his appointed rounds and took his complaint right to the top [I presume the top meant Skip, not someone above the Classmate loyalty food chain.] Skip wrote John a letter of (mild) regret and offered him a free round-trip ticket to any of the destinations that HS-15 routinely services. Better hang to that, John, Skip rarely gives anything away free and as you can attest, the ride is better than any "E" ticket at Disneyland used to be.

Dif' mentioned that **Rich Holzknicht** is still serving as the Naval Attaché in Israel (think his life is interesting?) and that his (and our) good friend, **Glen Ives** just returned to CONUS after a successful deployment as the Ops Boss on GUAM. Glen spent many weeks involved in operations off the coast of Liberia which unfortunately precluded him from making a planned port visit in Toulon. Barbara and the Ives boys made the move from JAX to Norfolk to end Glen's geographic bachelor days and long commutes to home. Craig also clarified a "mis-speak" of mine in a previous column. As he put it,

I have no training as a doctor, dentist, oral hygienist, nurse, lab tech, corpsman, physician's assistant, never even drawn blood (I have watched ER a passel of times). So it would be rather ludicrous for me to be assigned as the liaison to the French Medical HQ, as you reported in the May issue. Since Toulon sits right next to the Mediterranean Sea, the French Navy has a headquarters here, which takes care of ops in the, you guessed it, **Med**...and that's where I do my liaison act.

Well, I only print them as I see them (or SHOULD see them). Anyway, Craig's act is up soon. In closing, he said that he, Libby and the kids expect to be back in the DC area next Summer where he can at least pretend to be a doctor. His orders for his relief have hit the streets—at least so he'd been told by his forked-tongued wonder, I mean, detailer. In the meantime, he's up for Navy football season tickets.

In some additional grab bag cleanup...courtesy of the **Matt Elias** archive folder...**Todd Tracy** is CO of VQ-3 at Tinker AFB, in Oklahoma City. Another proof that it's a small world after all (AAAGGGH...I CAN'T believe I said that! Now I have that incessant, nerve-wracking Disney tune going through my head)...Matt's cousin bought a house in New Hampshire from someone who recognized the last name and wondered if there was a connection with a Classmate of his from the great '78. The seller was none other than **John Skogsberg**. Skogs, formerly with F-14s, now flies for airlines. Nancy and **Mike Amicarella** were still homesteading in Carson City, Nevada, just twenty minutes from Tahoe. This year marked four years on station. Mike is the range officer for NAS Fallon. Nancy works for the school

district—as a nurse, so Matt thought. Their son, Jamie (15) was a star on the football and basketball teams. He should be a sophomore now. Their daughter, Corey (13) is also a star athlete. As I wrote in a previous column, Bruny and **Harry Harris** are in Whidby Island. He's CO of one of the P-3 squadrons there, while **Jim Scola** is the other. **Steve Koronka** is a reserve pork chop. He'd been doing some training at Fort Benning for an overseas stint in Bosnia. **Sam Sowell**, after 16 years of sea duty, first as a shoe and then as a RIO is now on his second consecutive shore tour. After a stint in testing and evaluation at Eglin, he is now running the survival school at Schools Command. Those of you who remember Survival Training can write to him for those favorite road kill, snake stew and palmetto leaf salad recipes you'd long since forgotten but still yearn for. **Dave Babcock** is stationed with TRAWING FIVE at NAS Pensacola. Also with the training command are **Dave Jenkins**, CO of VT-2, and **Bill Yeager**, as his trusty sidekick and XO. I thought Dave was going to pass the baton to Bill. According to Matt, Dave was supposed to have gone back to the Academy, but there was a sea billet with his name on it—San Diego and a helo deck. Any confirmation?

Rich Chapman spent the last year in DC at the Language Institute, fully immersed in Japanese. He's now at the Japanese War College in Tokyo and may be staying on as an instructor. He and Laura have three kids, Caroline, Alexa and Christian. Sherry and **Bill Hession** and their five girls relocated from New Jersey to Fredericksburg, VA. They built a new home there. Bill works for the mega-giant Lockheed Martin, like just about everybody else in the defense business these days. Wendy and **Scot Miller** are in Hawaii with their son Jeffrey. Scot is on the CINCPAC staff and may also be teaching some courses at Embry Riddle and Hawaii Pacific University on the side. As for Elias, he's the CO of the Recruiting District down in Dallas, TX. He's near his old roommates **Rusty Cone** and **Prentiss Hall**. Patti, Rusty and their two kids, Bobby and Kristen, live in Allen, TX, while Mona, Prentiss and their three kids, Austin, Cameron and Ethan, live just down the road in South Lake, where Prentiss is a Mexalicious Regional Manager with Taco Bell. Well, that's all the room I have, Matt...I'll keep up with the grab bag catch up and see how far it takes to break even...Any bets, folks?

Launchin' Spot Four and begging for editorial mercy.

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Wow, even I found the July-August intro ridiculously long. If I didn't know it was me doin' the thing, I'd be asking myself (as I'm sure all of you do on a monthly basis); "Who is this yo-yo and why do we put up with the guy?" Well kids, hunker down, 'cause here comes yet another WAY long intro filler deal and since Kaye Bailey-Hutchinson did such a superb job of listing the Active Duty president's accomplishments at the convention, there's no need for a no-name-wannabe like me to stick Billary Bashing stuff here in the article. I must admit however, it sure is tempting. Anyway, this pathetic stab at humor is focused on the big competition between where we're having the 20th. The latest CBS/New York