

CDR Hulse accepted the gift with great appreciation and asked Dave to pass on a great "thank you" to the Class of '77 for our most generous gift. Dave then presented CDR Hulse with the USNA Class of '77 plaque and read the inscription, which resulted in a large round of applause from the assembled crowd. Dave said that whoever composed the words did a great job, and thanked the Class for allowing him the honor of making the presentation on our behalf.

The next day, on Saturday, 23 October 1999, Dave attended the commissioning of O'KANE in Pearl Harbor. It was one of those perfect Hawaiian days, with a bright sun and a light breeze to keep everyone comfortable. ADM **Denny Blair '68**, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, was the senior officer attending the ceremony, which started at 10 a.m. sharp and had the usual set of introductory speakers. The highlight of the ceremony was a speech by **Edward L. Beach '39**, a WWII submariner and author, who spoke about **RADM Richard O'Kane '34**. Following words by the ship's sponsor, Ms. Leslie Allen Berry (granddaughter of RADM O'Kane), the ship was commissioned, manned, and came to life.

This was a grass roots effort that was spearheaded by a few of our Classmates. Rick White wanted to give special thanks to Jim Kelly and Bruce Campbell for playing banker, Tom "Soup" Campbell for playing gopher, **Dan Thompson** for playing social arranger, and certainly to Dave Comis for his last minute pinch hitting. If Rick forgot someone, let him know since he claims his brain isn't what it used to be.

#### Lessons Learned

Rick learned a couple of things from this effort. First, there's a significant ground swell for '77 to "mature;" that is to figure out who we are, who we want to be, and how history will regard us. There are many paths to choose and Rick is committed to helping us; however, one huge hurdle stands in our way—communications. We do not have a well-defined mechanism to get information out in a consistent and timely manner. *Shipmate* is good, but as you all know, it has timing issues and is not good to disseminate immediate information or for issues that require immediate action.

Our earlier-mentioned effort to update the Alumni Association's records with our current email addresses, and Soup's effort to set-up a better electronic distribution system is geared toward improving our ability to keep everyone better informed, which will also tie-in with **Dan Smith's** efforts on the Alumni Association's Web page. A quick example illustrates the benefits of having a more effective communication method: Dave Comis had no idea that the effort to support DDG-77 was underway, and **Dan Thompson** reported that 29 Classmates attended the commissioning. In hindsight, it would have been nice to orchestrate this effort better and to give our Class more visibility at the event. Our next target for Class participation will be CVN-77, and there's also the 25th Reunion coming up in 2002. We need help to keep everyone informed, so if you have any other ideas on improving class communications, feel free to send ideas directly to Soup. Thanks again for your support.

From **Floyd Houston** (f.houston@erols.com):

'Twas the month before Christmas, and time to let you know what we've been up to over the past year, which has been a great year of celebrations and new beginnings. First, make sure that you note our new address—still in Burke, VA, but a slightly bigger house with enough basement room for all of Floyd's and the kids' things! (9504 Wallingford Drive, Burke, VA 22015; 703-323-6316) The house is on a pipestem with lots of trees in the back, and is still in the same school area for the kids.

The big life-changing event for us was Floyd's retirement from the Marine Corps after 22 years...the ceremony was memorable, plus he received the Legion of Merit for all of his work. The party was great, with many friends and family joining us to celebrate. In fact, it was so much fun that starting another job on the Monday after the party was beyond tough! Floyd now works for TASC, supporting the Marine Corps. He reports that there *is* life after the military, and that eight-hour workdays really change your attitude!

May-June was another milestone at our house...Steph achieved five years of survivorship! HURRAH! It is truly miraculous to have survived all that—and to be one of the very few women with inflammatory breast cancer to have done so. Praise the Lord! All was not perfect, though, for Steph's thyroid went hyper and created a new set of problems, from high blood pressure to memory loss to sleeplessness to...and it wasn't because she was at that magical 50 mark! Her thyroid was "nuked" in July, and she reports that she's starting to feel more like herself. She took a leave of absence from her home health job and is debating whether or not to resume—health care is not what it used to be, and it's not as much fun as it used to be.

We also have a new family member—a West Highland terrier named "Mac," or August Mackenzie. She arrived at eight weeks near the end of August, so we had a little time with her before school started. She is a nice dog, and just a little stubborn! (No comment!) Mac truly seems to think that Steph is her mother—or, at least, her spiritual advisor! Obviously, her Christmas present will be obedience school lessons!

John is a freshman in high school and even gets to walk to school! His favorite class is technical drawing, plus he takes art class on Saturday mornings. His big extracurricular activity is Civil Air Patrol—uniforms and airplanes, two of John's interests. He volunteered at Camp Perry, OH, last summer and wants to do so again next year. He'll be working on confirmation at church and may try out for crew...in his "spare" time! John's sense of humor is starting to come through—now if his parents could just find theirs...

Emily is in sixth grade at the GT school this year—a new experience that she's enjoying. Emily played softball this fall and began saxophone lessons to go with her piano lessons. She formed a craft club with four friends last summer—they made a craft project each week and went swimming afterwards—fun! They finished up with a session at the Build-a-Bear Workshop and an overnight...and want to do more! Em also took sewing lessons—each day she reads the classifieds in the paper, looking for sewing machines and VW Beetles. She is a new Beetle fan and has even started a fund to buy one when she's 16! (She'll have to get a job first!)

We all went to Camp Perry this summer; Emily and Floyd competed. Em did better than she thought she would for an 11-year-old and Floyd didn't do as well as he wanted...they get to try again next year! Steph liked the part about sitting beside Lake Erie and reading a book! Steph, John, and Emily visited the Harrisons in upstate New York for a few days—a slow-paced lifestyle that contrasts with what we have here in northern Virginia! Next year, Floyd will have more vacation days—but will also probably have his hip replacement—another interesting event in our lives! We wish you all the best, and hope that God continues to bless you and keep you in His hands.

#### Closing Remarks

Well, that's all for this month. I'm looking forward to the challenge of improving communications within our Class, and keeping everyone informed of new happenings and events that are of interest to us all. Please keep your cards, letters, notes, calls, and pictures coming in (preferably via my email address above), and I will do my very best to get the word out. Until next month! —**Bob Sanderson**

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Hey, if it's Lamb shish, kilims, and mosques, it must be Turkey! I've been here for a month now, negotiating a contract. We're taking bets as to when I'll be returning to the States. It's anyone's guess. At least with a Med-float there was a planned beginning and an end date from which you could be extended. Here it's just one day at a time. So far my old computer has been a casualty of the trip. It was a couple of weeks after the Y2K panic, so I couldn't blame its demise on that. It must be the dry air of Ankara. Regardless of the cause, it's a goner. Now I have a new laptop, flown in from the States. Once in a while I try to squeeze enough 'trons into the old one in an attempt to retrieve old files. It's been nothing but futility. Well, at least I have some news that I can put into this long-distance column. Here we go...

**Charles "Nick" Nickell** (cgnickell@duesouth.net) sent an update. No doubt inspired by seeing his name in a previous column. In case the name doesn't ring a bell, try saying *Charlie* Nickell. Is that more familiar? He says he's either grown up and become sophisticated or something. He doesn't go by Charlie anymore. Either Charles or Nick (his nickname since childhood). (Sec'y: I know how it is. I too don't go by my previous name of Vince. It's now "Lord High Master" and "Omniscient Scribe.") Nick is doing well. He's an OM with WSRC working at SRS. In the civilian acronym lexicon, that means operations manager with Westinghouse Savannah River Company at Savannah River Site. They store high level radioactive waste (from the nuclear bomb-making days) in million gallon tanks and process it for disposal by mixing it in a glass melter and pouring it into steel canisters. Yes, it's just a long way of saying that he's a trash man. He says it may not seem as exciting compared to the corporate world, but it puts food on the table. Nick's been there for 14 years, ever since he left the Navy in late '85.

Besides work, he spends most of his time taking care of his three boys, Ryan (15), Cole (13), and Chad (11), and their "princess," daughter Julia (6). Ryan wants to swim for Navy, Cole wants to play basketball for Clemson, Chad wants to play with Beanie Babies, and Julia just wants to wrap dad around her finger. They're lots of work but so much fun. He and Dana just celebrated their 21st wedding anniversary in August and every year keeps getting better. The kids are involved in swimming, soccer, basketball, piano, gymnastics, church youth group, etc., etc. Old dad (now age 45 and feeling every bit of it) even plays on the men's church basketball team. He calls it the geriatric league. They have a great church that they joined about 13 years ago. Lots of committed Christians and good friends. They're located in Aiken, SC, across the Savannah River from Augusta, GA. He says is a charming town and a great place to raise a family. (Sec'y: Elizabeth is familiar with Aiken, Nick. She used to live there back in the '60s when her folks taught school there.) Thanks for the update and don't wait another 20 years!

**Dennis Reilly** (dreilly@backweb.com) sent some New Year's news. He, Denise and their four kids, Cailyn (14), Brendan (13), Connor (11), and Brian (8) spent part of the Christmas holiday on North Carolina's Outer Banks with Cheri and **Drew**



**Mulhare** and their three lovely girls, Shelby (16), Meghan (13), and Jamie (10). The Mulhares still live at Ford's Colony in Williamsburg, VA, where Drew is the community manager and Vice President for Operations for Realtec, Inc., the developer. Thanks to Drew's efforts, Ford's Colony was just awarded the Best Managed Community in America by the Community Association Institute. BZ, Drew! Drew and Cheri are kind enough to again host the annual USNA Class of '78 Golf Tournament in Williamsburg. The scheduled date is Saturday, 13 May. Tee time is usually at 11:30 a.m. and a family barbecue follows at the Mulhare's. It's a great time. No prior golf experience is required. Those interested can contact Dennis or Drew at w: 757-258-4230, h: 757-258-3995, or [drew\\_mulhare@prodigy.com](mailto:drew_mulhare@prodigy.com) for details.

Dennis and Dennis also had the pleasure of hosting Barb and **Scott Eckert** and Barb and **John Cohoon** for the 6th anniversary of Scott's 39th birthday. Scott and Barb still live in Annandale, VA. Scott is the Director of Sales for the Eastern Region for ADC Telecommunications, a telecommunications equipment manufacturer ([scott\\_eckert@adc.com](mailto:scott_eckert@adc.com)). They stay busy with their two daughters, Elizabeth (12) and Lindsay (9). The Cohoon's live in Arlington, VA. John is on the CNO Staff (OpNav N12) in the Manpower and Training shop at the Navy Annex. He'll move to the Joint Staff this summer. Barb and his boys, Andrew (16) and Marshall (13), are enjoying having John home more after lots of sea time and his successful tour as CO of BUFFALO (SSN-713). Denise, Dennis and their four kids moved to the other side of Fairfax County last summer to McLean, VA. Dennis also joined Back Web Technologies, Inc. about a year ago. He's the director of sales for the eastern region. The company is a rapidly growing Internet software company. Their specialty is in push solutions for e-business. Dennis' contact info is w: 703-847-5423, h: 703-790-9621, or [dreilly@backweb.com](mailto:dreilly@backweb.com). Dennis bumped into **Fred Butterfield** (Fred.Butterfield@EM.DOE.GOV) at Washington Reagan National Airport. Fred said he went on a Christian mission to Romania last year and found it very rewarding. He was on his way to meeting to discuss a greater involvement in the organization that sponsored the mission. Fred lives in Burke, VA, with his wife and two boys; young men really, (can't remember names) and works at the Dept of Energy.

Dennis also bumped into **CAPT Rand Lebovior** on the Metro in D.C. Rand lives in Vienna, VA. He is the head, Aviation Systems Branch (N854) on the CNO Staff. He manages the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Program and loves it.

**Chris Hassler** (Chassler1@aol.com) is now in D.C. He works for SM&A, a consulting firm specializing in proposal support for large defense firms. Chris says to erase all his old Seattle numbers from your Palm Pilots and day timers. Since he didn't release it for a Class A/Nav you'll have to drop me a line or send him an email to get the particulars.

**Gary Eisenmann** ([eisenmann@konnnect.net](mailto:eisenmann@konnnect.net)) dropped me another line all the way from the "Rock," aka Okinawa. He provided a little post-Super-Typhoon Bart update. In the aftermath, he heard reports of wind speeds around 150...175...192 mph. But then, once you get over a hundred or so, what difference does it make? The base (MCB Butler) lost a few roofs (is 30 more than a few?), which added \$6,000K to their backlog of maintenance and repair. The estimated total damage was around \$1.7 million. HQMC has already sent them a large chunk of change so they

could almost fix most of the roofs. What a way to run a business, Gary bemoans. Typhoon-damaged or not, their New Year's was spent at the Butler O'Club, celebrating with all the Marine generals on the island. As the clock rolled over, everyone cheered and yelled and celebrated with noise-makers and champagne. Being the Facilities Maintenance Officer (and therefore responsible for Facilities Y2K issues), Gary waited a moment or two before he yelled to his wife with great glee... "Look, the lights are still on... I'm going to go flush a toilet!" Yes, he boasted, she married him because he *knows* how to have a good time. The season's spirit was a bit dampened by the Corps' little Merry Christmas present. The week before Christmas, the results of the colonel selection board were announced. For a few old lieutenant colonels it was a nice present. For Gary (and I know some others) it was a lump of coal in the stocking. He did mention those who did make it from '78—**Kevin O'Keefe**, **John Wissler**, **Bill Miles**, and **Tim Hanifen**. (Congrats!) The promotion zone split the Class so next year will be another story. As a result of the pass, Gary says he'll be looking for a job now and may just have to start working for a living! Actually he's on a three-year tour on the Rock so he'll have to stick around until this summer. So far Gary says he has heard that HQMC has not approved early releases from the three-year commitment just because a Marine wants to retire—even after the Corps says the career is over. Go figure. Gary has a professional engineer license, two master's degrees (courtesy of Uncle Sam and Monterey and Newport) and a bunch of facilities experience so he shouldn't have any problems reeling in a good position. Of course he says what he really needs is a college looking for a facilities guy—one that will pay his four boys' tuition. Well that last criteria of his leaves out his being offered the head "digger and filler" job at Mother B—unless his boys get appointments. The "Iceman" has maintained a good attitude about it all. He's heeding the advice from one retired Marine who upon hearing his bad news told him, "it is a lot more fun out here, anyway." That's true, Gary (unless you happen to be stuck in Ankara). Good luck and we look forward to seeing you back in CONUS.

Sally and **John M. O'Dwyer** (along with the four youngsters,) arrived in D.C. in April '99 after two years in Gaeta, Italy. While in Gaeta John was assigned to the Sixth Fleet Staff. After some pipeline training, he assumed command of the Naval Information Warfare Activity in October '99. (You can find a passing mention of NIWA at <http://defencejournal.com/march98/jointinfo.htm> but aside from that, it's a pretty low profile organization!) The O'Dwyers really enjoyed Italy, but all things considered, it's good to be back in the States. (I hope to share that feeling too!)

In closing, **Al "Blues" Baker** reported that during the halftime of Navy's defeat of Army 76-49 in Round Ball at Annapolis in January that there was an Alumni Shoot-out. Blues reported that our Class was well represented in the competition against numerous other Alumni. **Craig Diffie** was at least hitting the rim while **Bob Schermund** rebounded. A large contingent of '78ers were present with the obvious goal of distracting the other Classes from hitting the backboard. With their shouting and Diff's fancy shooting (other sources say he did much more than Al's email below implies) '78 left their mark at the game. Of course it also could've just been the ones left on the court by Schermund's black soles!

Well that's all for now. I gotta get going and prepare for another day of negotiation. Just to give you an idea how it's going—each day as I prepare to head out to the meetings, I am reminded of a bit

of graffiti I saw on a bathroom stall in the student Ready Room at Whiting Field. It was a comment by some struggling flight student about his instructor. It read, "I just know he's going to be mean to me today!" That pretty well sums it up—it's tough negotiating. Oh, if you have any news zap me via my office email. I have regular access to it from out here. The AOL address is a little tougher (and costlier). The address is [Vbalderrama@Sikorsky.com](mailto:Vbalderrama@Sikorsky.com). Looking forward to your email on my working computer. See ya—*Launchin' Spot Four*.

# 79

Annual Membership: 5%  
Life Membership: 88%

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Greetings, '79!

Well, it's said that April showers bring May flowers, and the Mayflower brought the Pilgrims, or some such. At any rate, I hope that you all have survived your own version of the Dark Ages and are now fully into Spring. For most of us, the snow storms, nor'easters and ice storms of January and February are behind us. I say "for most of us"—guys like **Ken Russell** are so busy with their businesses that they couldn't tell you what year it was, much less the season.

After three winters in WIZ-consin (that state just north of the pesky toll roads of Chicago) and one in coastal Mississippi, it's nice to be back in an area where Spring happens when Spring is supposed to happen (March, April and May). In Dairy Country, we lived so close to Lake Michigan that Spring was virtually non-existent: March high temperatures averaged in the 30s, April in the 40s, and May in the 50s. (A July visit to the shore might require a sweater). In Gulfport, MS, Spring was defined as "the second and third week of February," after which the double-90s (daily peak of both temperature and humidity) began.

But here in Southern Maryland, the weather is advertised as being more moderate; it now has my permission to start moderating. For the last 12 months or so, weather has played havoc with us here in the mid-Atlantic states. To paraphrase a certain unnamed Brigade Commander: "Weather has caused more power losses in hours than Y2K did in milliseconds." (Ken, that's a *real short* period of time.) Well, an average year is the result of ten abnormal ones...

So why am I going into all this? Well, this April is your opportunity to "shower" me with mail, email or otherwise, providing me with some good material that I "may" use for this space. Now if you want, I can amaze you with little-known facts about the compatibility of one of the Army's scout helicopters and its ability to pressure refuel aboard a 'gator. Or, if you prefer, I can cause you to groan in agony with my favorite form of humor, the pun. (Sec'y spouse note: Believe it—they cause physical pain!) Or you can help make this column worth reading by sending along a paragraph or two on how and what you're doing, where you're doing it, and with whom. And if you're like me, you finally got the roll of film developed that has both your Christmas and 20th Reunion photos on it. Submissions of said photos would also be eagerly accepted—we're fully multi-media capable here!