

clear blue Caribbean waters, dancing to non-stop *merengue* music, and drinking some of the best beer in the world (of course), Benny met the love of his life, Colette, at a Heineken Jazz Festival. They soon married, and their first child, Alejandro, was born nine months after their honeymoon cruise.

Benny's next assignment was from 1993-1995 in Guatemala City, Guatemala, as the human rights officer. In that role, he interviewed victims and reported on human rights crimes by trying to figure out who-did-what-to-whom-and-why during the 33rd and 34th years of Guatemala's 36-year-old civil war. Benny says that Guatemala, which is the land of eternal spring, is a beautiful, mountainous country with 30 volcanoes ("mostly" dormant), though he did get to see one smoking volcano from Guatemala City, which is about 5,000 feet above sea level. During this assignment, their second child, Colette, was born.

In October 1995, the Garcias arrived in Haiti, where Benny would be doing administrative work again for two years. The UN troop population there was 6,000, which was down from 20,000 just a few months before. Benny reminds us that the U.S. was poised to invade Haiti during that time (the 82nd Airborne was in the air and ready to jump) before the U.S. convinced the Haitian military leadership to step down. Living in the poorest country in the hemisphere meant that Benny's work was always challenging and he had to be extra careful due to the tumultuous political scene. Once when returning from a short road trip to visit his family in the Dominican Republic, the Garcias were caught in a citizen's roadblock. Lucky for them, Benny found some UN troops, which surprisingly included a Dutch sailor who had done fire fighting at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, to escort their family through the angry mob and burning tires.

The Garcias returned to Washington, D.C., from 1997-1999 for their first tour at the State Department as a post management officer, in which he was the administrative liaison for our embassies in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan of the former Soviet Union. Benny made three trips to this part of the world and he thanks God we won the Cold War since he likes his Western-style amenities! During this tour, Benny received a Superior Honor Award and a President's Council Year 2000 Award for getting our embassies in Europe and the Newly Independent States ready for the Y2K turnover. (Kind of ironic for a guy who hated computers at Navy!) In 1998, he became an alumnus of the International Career Advancement Program (ICAP), which is sponsored by the Graduate School of International Studies of the University of Denver. Benny says that it's a great program and invites you to check it out at [www.du.edu/~rowe.icap](http://www.du.edu/~rowe.icap).

In July 1999, the Garcia family arrived at the American Embassy in Lima, Peru, where Benny is the human resources officer for a Mission with 233 American and 433 Peruvian positions from 12 different U.S. government agencies. Benny suspects that some of you (or people you know) may be among the 200-plus TDY personnel who arrive every week. These personnel are typically involved in the U.S. Government's counter narcotics and alternative development (i.e., "growing something besides drugs") efforts. Although they certainly didn't expect it, the Garcias have found themselves living in another country with political troubles (you may have heard of President Fujimouri's surprise resignation after his intelligence chief was caught on video tape bribing a Congressman).

As for the rest of the family, Alejandro, who is now a third grader, and Colette, who is in first grade,

both love their respective American- and British-based Peruvian private schools. Lima, which is a modern South American capital with eight million people, is situated along the Pacific desert coast and has many offerings. Benny says that the Lost City of Machu Picchu, which houses the world-famous Inca ruins that are perched on cliffs over 8,000 feet, is a must see. He warns that the trip isn't cheap and is not recommended for those with a fear of heights (not to mention the three-hour train ride from Cusco is not the Orient Express!). The more athletically skilled can take the Inca Trail's three-to-five-day hikes and experience the feel of trekking 10,000 feet above sea level.

Benny says that the only Classmates he runs into every couple of years are **Chris Ryan** ([cryan@qualityfabricators.com](mailto:cryan@qualityfabricators.com)) and **Jerry Miller** ([jermil@pilot.infi.net](mailto:jermil@pilot.infi.net)), both from 19th Company. At one of their last get-togethers at a Miller barmitzvah, Chris convinced Colette to smoke a cigarette with their group on the outside lawn after her seven-year cigarette abstinence ("What are friends for!"). Seriously, Benny invites Chris, Jerry, and the rest of '77 to Peru (or to his next assignment), which should occur this summer somewhere in Latin America. Benny's final comments were, "Oh, I almost forgot. A few days ago, I sent in my Naval Reserve retirement papers. *Go Navy!*" His mailing address is AmEmbassy Unit 3753 APO AA 34031.

**Dave Vail** ([davidvail@earthlink.net](mailto:davidvail@earthlink.net)), who is currently the regional safety director for Perini Building Company, was recently recognized in the latest issue of *Distinguished Men in Southern Nevada*. Dave was honored along with over 400 candidates in the year 2000-2001 issue. This is Dave's second appearance in the publication (the first was in the 1998-99 issue). *Distinguished Men in Southern Nevada* is a "who's who" type reference book that acknowledges individuals who have contributed significantly to their professions and community. Copies of the publication are distributed to public libraries, private and public schools, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Community College of Southern Nevada, the state library and archives, and to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In addition to Dave being named in the *Distinguished Publishing* issue, his wife, Mary, was presented with the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce Community Achievement Humanitarian Award for the year 2000 in September 2000.

#### Class Communication

As part of our initial preparations for the 25th Reunion next year, **Tom "Soup" Campbell** ([Tom.Campbell@longandfoster.com](mailto:Tom.Campbell@longandfoster.com)) has scheduled a planning meeting for 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, 1 April 2001 at his home in Fairfax, VA (4712 Leehigh Court). Soup welcomes any and all comers, and plans to discuss ideas for the dinner dance, the tailgate party, music, memorabilia, etc. If you'd like to play a more active role in our reunion (or would simply like to have some input or find out what's going on with it), you should definitely plan on attending the meeting. If you will be attending, please contact Soup directly at 703-293-6368 or send him an email at the above address.

In a more tangible Class communication area, you'll be pleased to know that the Alumni Association has created a tool on their Web site ([www.usna.com](http://www.usna.com)) that provides us with direct access to their Alumni database, which should greatly facilitate your ability to find demographic information (both mailing and email addresses) on Classmates and other Alumni. The Alumni Online lookup service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a

week and can only be accessed by Naval Academy Alumni (which conforms with the Alumni Association's privacy policy on Alumni data). To use the service, you must first register on the Association's Web site through the use of a unique registration number and PIN. If you're a current life or annual member of the Alumni Association, both of these numbers are located on your *Shipmate* mailing label. If you're not currently an Alumni Association member (how could you be reading this column if you're not?), you can contact Member Support at 410-263-4448 to acquire your own registration number and PIN. I've tried the service and it seems to work pretty well (as long as the Alumnus has provided up-to-date information to the Alumni Association, of course). I urge you to give the service a shot by checking to ensure that your own information is complete and correct (and update it if it's not!). This service should make it much easier for the Company Coordinators to quickly gather accurate contact information for most of our Classmates, and help all of us to keep in touch with each other better.

#### Closing Remarks

Well, another column draws to a close, and believe it or not I don't have much more to say other than, "See you next month and *Go Navy!*"

—**Bob Sanderson**

# 78

Annual Membership: 18%  
Life Membership: 70%

Pres: **Arch Griffin**

Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**

45 Little Fawn Drive, Shelton, CT 06484

E: [VBalderrama@Sikorsky.com](mailto:VBalderrama@Sikorsky.com)

Class Web site: <http://usna1978.org>

What in the "Sam Hill" is this world coming to? Just when you thought things couldn't get any cushier from the days when ships were made of wood and men were made of iron, along comes case for your "When I was Mid..." files. The powers at Mother B are allowing refrigerators in Midshipman rooms. On 1 December of last year, Martha Thorn, USNA Public Affairs, announced that Firsties could purchase and have those reefers in their rooms (the two don't necessarily go together, remember?—Oh you can go buy a TV Mister Balderrama but we better not *find* it in your room!). The Brigade staff asked for the policy change and the Commandant, **Sam Locklear '77**, said okay. According to the news article, Sam "approved it on the rationale that privileges become greater as the students get more senior." I guess Sam could also have claimed it was to add another facet to their JO training—how to select a reefer that's just the right size to squeeze into the sardine-can sized stateroom you share with three other officers, but still roomy enough to hold all your "authorized" beverages and food. (Not to mention one that's cheap but of enough quality to get the 1st Division officer "Okay" sticker on it.) Geez, remember when the only "reefers" allowed in our rooms were the kind you wore? I heartily object to the new perk not just so much because it seems too cushy and ratey—even for Firsties—(though that's true too); but because they also are taking a bit of the fun out of being a Mid. I mean, where's the fun of trying to get around the Regs when everything becomes allowable? Mmmm... didn't those grill cheese sandwiches made with your illegal toaster oven, Sandwich-Man or even your iron taste extra delicious just because you beat the



system? A bit more of the "game" that helped foster resourcefulness and ingenuity (skills that have come in handy many times in our careers) seems to have been eliminated. Just think of hiding in nearly plain view a small operating TV as a "planter" or all the constituent parts of a radio disguised as an art deco piece. Where are today's Mids going to find these lessons and hone those skills? I don't know, maybe I'm just getting old but life is serious enough as it is and can get more so the older you get without adding to it—especially for a 21 and 22 year old. They ought to keep those little opportunities for fun-of-being-a-Mid right where they are! Besides, just think of the sea stories today's Mids *won't* be able to tell at their 20th reunion! With that, I'm on to the mail bag...

This year's colonel selection has more Classmates on the list. "Congratulations" and a big "ARRUGAAH" goes out to **Dave Barile**, **Bob Destafney**, **Dick Findley**, **Bill Hartig**, **Jim Harbison**, **John Page**, **Lon Yeary** and **Gary Shaw**.

**Drew Mulhare** (dmulhare@fordscolony.com) sent a change to his email address so take note. He also wants to remind you that on the Saturday before Mother's Day, 12 May, he'll host the annual Class of '78 Golf Tourney in Williamsburg. It is the standard fare: 10:30 a.m. check in; 11:00 a.m. tee times through about 11:30 a.m. depending on the number of players; Captain's Choice; 4:30 p.m. family picnic. \$78.00 for golf and picnic and \$15.00 for just the picnic. Kids are free—even for you old dogs with kids in college.

The Alumni Association announced a new feature is available through the usna.com Web site. All Naval Academy Alumni will now be able to go online to look up Classmates and other Alumni through their new Alumni Online Lookup program. The service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Adhering to their privacy policy (which is accessible on the Web site), this service and the Alumni information will be available only to Naval Academy Alumni. To access this new service, you must register on the Association's Web site with your unique register number and PIN. If you are a current life or annual Alumni member of the Alumni Association, both numbers are located on your *Shipmate* magazine mailing label. If you are not a member, you can contact Member Support at 410-263-4448 to acquire this information.

**Scott Rodgers** dropped a couple of lines. He went up to Norfolk on 25 August for **Liz Belzer (Semcken) Rowe '80's** retirement. He attached a picture which shows Scott, John Semcken and Liz's daughter, Rebecca (16), and **Kathy Karlson Ozimek '80** (married to **Pete Ozimek '77**). Scott and Kathy are the godparents of Rebecca and had not been back together since the christening when she was a newborn.



Scott, Rebecca and Kathy

Scott spent a couple of days in L.A. with Liz's ex and our good buddy and Classmate, **John Semcken**, for a little dinner and golf. It had been a year since they last saw each other. That was when John went to Atlanta for the Super Bowl. John works for a corporate real estate company whose owner



'78: The Barties in Westport

also owns half the Lakers and Kings, not to mention all the real estate. (John built the Staples Center in downtown Atlanta.). He seems to be doing well there but working a lot. (Aren't we all. But hey, if the "compensation" is worth it...) Scott was to go school on the Boeing 757/767 at the end of last year. Afterward he would start flying to Europe, South America, Caribbean and Hawaii. He should get to New York on a regular basis. During those times we hope to get together. (New York's just down the road.) He heard that Matt Paz is no longer with American Airlines.

**Scott Godfrey** (K9madmax2@aol.com) was also going to 757/767 training during December out in the Atlanta area. Who knows, maybe he and Scott crossed paths.

Here's some photo stuff culled from Christmas cards, from Kirsten and **Steve Bartie**, Julie and **Brad Richardson** (showing that the Mid Store has something for everyone). There's also a photo I culled from Katie and **Jeff Fowler's** annual Christmas. It shows them saying "Aloha" to the warm Hawaiian islands. (They're now in freezing Nebraska!) Note: Enjoy the show and *Write!*



The Richardsons visit the Yard



The Fowlers say "Aloha"

**Tom McLeod** sent a photo of a mini-reunion for '78 at the Navy-Notre Dame game in Orlando last year. Those attending were Judy and Tom McLeod, Rebecca and **Rick Yasky**, Luan and **John Watters**, **Doug Ray**, **Chris DeMarche**, Cindy and **Steve Maloney**, Alden "**Rock**" **Williams**, Beth and **Denis Viera**, Jan and **Jim Fiorelli**.

Well, that's all there is, catch you later—launchin' Spot Four.



'78 mini-reunion

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