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In the last few columns you've captured a little update on **Joe Fitzgerald** as he reminisced slightly about **Bill Terry** and how he brought us up to date on his own life and family. Joe's back in the spotlight again as **Fred Butterfield** (fred.butterfield@gsa.gov) in his newsletter to their 22nd Companymates wrote of the passing of Diane and Joe's son, Christopher (15). While it certainly is sad news, and our sympathy and compassion go out to Diane, Joe and their family, it is an inspirational story of love and courage which I am glad Joe and Fred shared with me; and which I will let them speak of through their own eloquence. Here's Fred's email:

It is with my deepest regrets that I pass on the very sad news that Christopher Fitzgerald, (15), the adopted, only child of Joe and Diane Fitzgerald, died last Tuesday, 30 July.

Christopher was born in 1987 with severe autism and cystic fibrosis. Shortly after birth, he was placed in foster care with a loving Mennonite family in Brightwood, VA, a rural area some 20 miles north of Charlottesville. In the fall of 1988, while Joe was stationed aboard TICONDEROGA (CG-47), Joe and Diane adopted Christopher, who was then 19 months old. He quickly became the center, and love, of their lives.

Christopher's death from cystic fibrosis was expected, indeed, it was virtually inevitable, barring a miracle. Joe and Diane faced this fact with flinty courage and determination. They loved their severely handicapped son, Christopher freely, fiercely, and unconditionally. In fact, throughout all the unceasing demands of Christopher's respiratory care, which included repeated hospitalizations, overlaid with the formidable challenges associated with raising a severely autistic child, my wife Janet and I honestly don't believe we have ever seen such love in action. Joe and Diane simply adjusted their lives to meet Christopher's need, whatever the cost.

Christopher's funeral service was held in Albany, NY, this past Friday, and he was brought back home to Brightwood to be buried the following day next to his older brother (who had also died of cystic fibrosis) in a small church cemetery several miles from his foster family's home, in the shadow of the Blue Ridge. The graveside service was attended by a small crowd of mourners from the mid-Atlantic to New York, including Janet and me. After this, Joe passed out to all a touching eulogy he penned, which he had read at Chris' funeral service the previous day, which offers personal glimpses into their relationship. A few excerpts from his poignant "love letter" to his son follows:

Do you remember the first night you were ours to love and hold, forever? You stared at me from your crib, looking for answers—I don't know why—did you miss the valley (in central Virginia) and your family before us? The next day as I handed out cigars aboard TICO, proudly proclaiming my son...

Mascot of the regiment of officer candidates (Joe was in officer-in-charge of candidates at OCS), at Newport, trooping the line at Friday's pass-in-reviews; inspecting shoes at the hoot and toot; motorboat rides with me during Saturday sailing classes; shooting hoops in the OCS gym; and loving the regiment's band practices...Newport also saw you aboard dad's ship, SIMPSON (Joe was XO— you liked my stateroom TV!)

I always enjoyed being called Christopher's dad by all the people there (Macon, GA0 who knew you, and not me, at the (local baseball) games...

Nashville—You made me a better commanding officer (Joe was CO of one of the recruiting districts) than I would have been. More knowledgeable and understanding of my people's needs and difficulties. Though I traveled frequently as the CO, your smile welcomed me home every time—especially for our walks and swings at the town part in Franklin.

You left us in mommy and my arms, after you had said good bye with your eyes. You will always be in our hearts. But now you are free of disease, autism, and all your struggles. Go with Jesus, now, until we see you again...

Fred closed by adding that letters of condolence and greeting can be sent to Diane and Joe at 27 Danker Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. I'll include a note of thanks to them (and Fred) for re-awakening an awareness of things I may have taken for granted lately and reminding me that I can be (and have within me) a much stronger person than I sometimes might have believed.

Now on to other news...

Aaron Watts (a.d.watts@worldnet.att.net) and his 15th Company Classmates had a mini-reunion over the Memorial Day weekend. Actually it was a combined ship visit and crab party! PHILIPPINE SEA (CG-58) was the "ship in the yard" for graduation of the Class of 2002, and CO CAPT **Chris Nichols** took his 15th Company Classmates and family on a special tour. They ended the day with a Maryland blue crab party at Aaron's house in Herndon, VA. Nine 15th Company Classmates and spouses were there: **Bev and Case Runolfson, Larry Semanyk, Susie and Kevin Olsen, Morry Ray, Missy and Duane Lafont, Leslie and Chris Nichols, Bob Romaine, and Tony Poleondakis. Bob Schmermund** was among those attending the Philippine Sea tour. **Guido Manzo's** wife, Lora, also was involved in the crab feast at Chez Watts. She was solo for the day because Guido was at home in Jersey; "under the weather" with the flu. Aaron sent along some photos of the day's activities which I hope will make the "quality check" for *Shipmate*. If they fail to make the grade you can view the Memorial Day Weekend Crab Party and Ship Tour at www.shutterfly.com/osi.jsp?i=67b0de21b3070828c42b.

Thanks for the update Aaron, nice link too!



Crab feast



More crab feast



Ols imitates a crab

Al Kuntz thought I might have to look up his picture in the *Lucky Bag* to remember him—especially since it's been a while since he last wrote. I told him how could I ever forget "Big Al"! Besides, these days one can't always be sure that *Lucky Bag* picture of the 22 year old Firstie even remotely resembles the middle-aged (but still dapper in our own way!) man in the mirror. During Al's naval career he spent two tours in Japan with the Eagles of VA-115 (A-6 Intruders, when they were still around). The last go around was as the CO. After a year of Naval War College he did a twilight tour as OPSO on LINCOLN before retiring in June of '99. Today he flies for Southwest Airlines. He's based in Oakland, CA, but that doesn't mean he lives there. Like most of you airline types, he has a long commute from home to crew base. In Al's case his commute is from Whitefish, MT, (near Glacier National Park). It's a little commute—only 1,000 miles each way! He and Michelle (Tozer) have been married for 18 years. They have three kids—a daughter Jaime (14) and sons Brad (13) and Kevin (11). His email "comm.link" is Aldoa64evr@aol.com or you can get him or the whole family at kuntzfam@bigsky.net.

Lee Price (Lee.Price@PENX62229M1.cnet.navy.mil) sent greetings from the cradle of naval aviation in sunny Northwest Florida. He just touched base to give a little info to help fill up the "Class Notes" in *Shipmate*. This February Lee left his job as Chief of Staff at TraWing Five at Whiting Field and reported to Schools Command at NAS Pensacola. He's the Director of Survival there but says he feels like he's more like a "health club manager." His only hope is that the Navy will forget about him and leave him in the job until he retires. So far, he's run into **Chip Walston** when he was still at TraWing Five. You may remember that Chip is the wing commander for HSL Pac in San Diego. (I tried reaching Chip while I was on base for a little business in San Diego in July but "no joy." Next trip maybe we'll link up.) In April, Lee had dinner with **Steve Brady**. (Steve is a contractor in Pax River.) Lee also has frequent phone conversations with **Jim "Worm" Warren**. (Jim is also a contractor at Pax.) Lee's been playing phone tag with **Scott Provow**, who lives in south Florida. He reported that the Class of '78 is in firm control of the Alumni Leadership Helm in the Florida Panhandle. He was recently elected

president of the Pensacola Chapter of the USNA Alumni Association. **Mike McCrabb** was elected vice-president of the chapter while **Dave Babcock** was the outgoing secretary of the chapter and **Rich Jesmonth** is the outgoing trustee. Dave's a contractor in the Pensacola area and Rich is a lawyer. If you ever *have to* go to Pensacola give Lee a call or send him an email at lee.price@cnet.navy.mil. He says there's always a cold beer and a steak in the fridge for any Classmate in the area. Of course, having gone through flight school survival training I can't help but wonder what *kind of* steaks are in the fridge!

In closing, a few saved rounds—Hey, guess who was this year's Color Girl? None other than **Eric Lindstrand's** daughter, Austin. By the way if anyone has his email or knows how to contact him let me know. Susan McCoy (Color Girl 1966) is trying to get back a form she gave Austin to fill out after the Color P-rade. As this goes to submittal, I haven't had luck in locating Austin or Eric. Belated congratulations to our new Marine Corps Reserve Colonel selectees, **Lee Yarberr** and **Chuck Lowther**. Launchin' Spot Four.

79

Annual Membership: 4%
Life Membership: 88%

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Greetings, 79!

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is **Wiz Withers** reporting live from atop the OVBN (Omnes Viri Broadcasting Network) mobile command post in Annapolis, MD. For 360 days a year, the city of Annapolis is known as "Crabtown," Maryland's capital, and the sailing mecca of the East Coast. But for five fall Saturday afternoons, the town is transformed into the home of Navy football! The streets are lined with vehicles adorned with Navy pennants, pom-poms, and goat mascots. I have even seen a rendering of those famed football heroes of yesteryear, "Super Straight" and "Go-Rilla!" Alumni are continually pouring in from DC, Baltimore, Northern Virginia, and even as far away as Leonardtown, having packed up the family to make their pilgrimage to "The Stadium." As we await the march-on of the Midshipmen for today's game, we'll bring you the latest news and get you ready for the afternoon's events. Now, for the first of several live reports from our intrepid roving reporters, let's go to **Mike Chauvenet**. Take it away, Mike:

Thanks, Wiz. I'm standing here in the south parking lot of Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. Vehicles started entering the grounds at around 9 a.m., and the ensuing jockeying for select parking spaces reminds me of those days along Dewey Seawall in the YP's. One does not merely park a car here, for the goal is actually to

congregate with Classmates for the all-important pre-game activity of tailgating. Over to my left is the famous '79 banner flown from **Fred Gerheiser's** SUV. Prior to going on the air, I interviewed some of those guys, who tell me that this year's catch phrase in the Yard is "Expect to Win!" In Alumni-land, this translates to "Cautiously Optimistic," which all agree is a noticeable and refreshing change. It seems as though folks are coming not only to partake in these parking lot festivities, but also to watch the games! We're still early in the season, but already the atmosphere is much different.

While sharing hot dogs and Texas sauce with this group, I picked up a couple of important tidbits. First, **Mario Bladuell** sent word that after updating the Class on his whereabouts, he had an unplanned address change. He's still in New York, and still wants to hear from Classmates. He can now be reached at Mario.Bladuell@1979.usna.com. Secondly, **Kirk Michealson** sent a quick email updating his email address to kirk.michealson@1979.usna.com. '79ers are advised that if an email sent to Kirk gets bounced back, it's most likely due to the rather unique spelling of his last name. Remember, in Kirk's case, "E" comes before "A" (except after "C"...no, scratch that!). Kirk also let everyone know that he's once again putting together an email list for all Classmates in the greater Washington, DC, area. This includes Baltimore, Annapolis, Richmond, and the surrounding region. Those interested in keeping updated with Class activities in that area are asked to send Kirk an email. Everyone is glad to have him back! That's all from here, Wiz. Back to you.

Thanks, Mike. Let's go immediately to our foreign correspondent, Bancroft Hall:

Hello, everyone! This is Bancroft Hall, reporting from the steps of the Maryland State House. As I look down Main Street toward the downtown docks, all I see is a sea of blue and gold. Those folks not heading over to the stadium are stepping in to one of the many fine establishments to watch the local television broadcast of the game. As they are getting settled, let's hit the items on the foreign desk. In the mailbag was a quick note from **Rich Hayes** out on the Left Coast. He enclosed a clipping announcing **Paul Hanrahan's** promotion to CEO of AES Energy as I reported last month. Rich also forwarded the announcement that **Joe Mulloy** took command of Submarine Squadron 15 last July in the Marianas. The civilian attire for the ceremony was "Island Wear," and I just wanted to let everyone know that this attire will soon be adopted by the foreign office staff. Anyway, we send our congratulations to Joe, and wish him best of luck in his new command. And Rich, thanks for the note! This is Bancroft Hall, signing off.

Thanks, Bancroft. Folks, if you've just joined us, this is **Wiz Withers** atop the OVBN mobile command post, bringing you all of today's Navy football pre-game activities. While we're waiting for our news crew to get situated, I have a couple of items to pass on. Now that football is once again the topic *du jour*, thoughts are once again turning to Homecoming. And *that* means that we are only two years out from the *gala 25th reunion extravaganza!* We here at OVBN don't have any specific intel, but some things are definitely in the hopper. I expect our erstwhile Class President **Sean Cate** to make an announcement in the not-too-distant future. Once that occurs, expect to find regular updates in our broadcasts as well as the web site. Stay tuned!

And speaking of the site, '79's Class Webmaster **Colin O'Neill** (with two "L's") pointed out that in our recent big promotion of the new and improved Class web site, I forgot to mention the address! I even forgot to put it in the column header of *Shipmate!* So get out your pencils and copy down: www.USNA79.com. Save that in your "favorites" folder. Make it your home page. Or (now that I've faced Colin's wrath) keep the current issue of *Shipmate* handy. Colin is always updating the site with current news, event notices, and topics of interest. For example, you can find the "Commandant's Intent," a cogent, thorough document outlining the Commandant's plans for the Plebe System (ably assisted by his deputy, our own **Greg Parker**). But hold off on "flaming" Colin for the dearth of photos. That's my fault—I have a bunch that I'm putting on CD to send him, but I haven't yet completed the project. I'm working on it!

Late last summer Karen and I took a pre-season road trip to Annapolis for an opportunity to catch up with good friends. Jean Bradley, widow of **Mike Bradley**, came up with her daughter Barbara to spend a couple of days. The Bradleys are still living in Montgomery, AL, and are both doing quite well. Barbara, now eight years old, enjoyed her first trip on the train, and got to see the place where her dad went to school. Also joining us in Annapolis were Darlene and **Mitch Shipley** (mns10@psu.edu), who drove over with the family from State College, PA. Mitch is a research associate at the Applied Research Lab at Penn State, and is currently involved with managing a low frequency active sonar project. Darlene is teaching in the grade school, and both of them are active in the PTA. Also keeping them busy are their three boys. Trevor started in the ninth grade this fall. Bryce is in middle school, and Austin has started first grade. Karen and I couldn't stay the entire weekend, so our great visit was all too brief.

Looks like they're now ready in the newsroom, so over to you guys.

Greetings, folks. **Melville Isherwood** here with a couple of items from the OVBN newsroom. A recent headline scan of *Navy Times* picked out an article that began, "Navy CAPT **Bill Toti** was traveling overseas earlier this year...when his government travel card suddenly stopped working." The article goes on to describe the efforts it took to get the card reactivated while in Afghanistan, and found out that he was but one of many service members who had experienced these problems. Bill didn't pull any punches in describing the government travel card system as "the single most hated issue by military members after health care." After relating some sea stories, Bill pointed out that our soldiers and sailors really suffer because of the delay in government reimbursement of travel claims, and added the issue to his list to brief the Navy staff. Another '79er on the job.

Also, a couple of weeks ago we received an email from **Bob Larys** (R_P_Larys@sar.med.navy.mil). Being newsroom folks, we edited it to suit our needs. When all that was done, we were left with this:

Thought I'd check in. I don't remember if I told you or not, but my name came out on the O-5 list. I've been wondering if making O-5 twice makes me an O-10 for retirement purposes. I'll put it on next spring I think. That was